



CLARENTINE.

A N O V E L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



L O N D O N:

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CLARENTINE.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE entire and unexpected acquittal that terminated Lady Delmington's letter, afflicting as was its general tenour, proved to Clarentine a source of alleviation the most chearing, and the most grateful. Her heart, lightened of the heavy weight that had oppressed and sunk it, whilst labouring beneath unmerited obloquy, now glowed with sensations of affection and delight; and assured that wherever she went, the esteem and good wishes of her friends would follow her, she summoned all her resolution to her aid, in order to accomplish the task assigned her, with chearfulness and resignation.

Her letter to Mr. Lenham was natural and respectful. She began by apologizing, after so many years absence, after so long and mutual a silence, for venturing to recall to his memory an object that must be so nearly obliterated from it; and then, as a still further excuse for the liberty she was taking, made use of the name of Mr. Somers, and related in simple and plain terms the flattering encouragement he had given her to apply to Mr. Lenham for protection and countenance, should any unforeseen event ever lay her under the necessity of quitting Delmington House. Such an event, she added, *had* now occurred; and it was the wish of Lady Delmington herself, that she should hazard the application with which she was about to trouble him.

Proceeding after this to state the nature of that application more at large, she hinted next, as delicately as she could, the terms upon which, alone, Lady Delmington had emboldened her to make such a request; and concluded by entreating, that whenever he favoured her with an answer, he would be as clear and explicit upon that article as possible.

Having directed and sent off this letter, she would by the same post have written again to Sophia : but apprehensive that Lady Delmington might disapprove her taking too frequent advantage of the permission she had granted her to continue the correspondence, she compelled herself to remain silent till she heard from Mr. Lenham, anxious as she was to prove, how little reality there was, in the idea her Ladyship seemed to entertain of her having conceived a stronger degree of affection for Sir Edgar, than she had hitherto avowed.

Nothing, in truth, could be more ill-grounded than this charge. That Clarentine loved him, in remembrance of the early friendship of their childhood, was fully sensible of the goodness of his heart, and did ample justice to his talents and his conversation, she wished not to disown : but that she now felt, or ever had experienced for him, that species of preference Lady Delmington, in one part of her letter, imputed to her, she found herself ready, in the face of heaven, to deny ! Nor did she think there was any merit in having thus withstood him ; since

Edgar, warmly as he had lately shewn himself attached to her, had never before given her any reason to believe him so partial: but on the contrary, by his extreme versatility, and inexplicable inconsistencies, had often led her to suspect he was actually playing a part for his own private amusement, whenever he shewed himself more attentive to her than usual. Above all disguise herself, inexperienced, and diffident of her own powers of attraction, it had not once occurred to her that it was possible any human being could endure a state of such perpetual anxiety, and undergo so long and irksome a restraint, merely from motives of concealed affection for her. As he had now, however, entered upon her justification, and made so honourable a report in her favour, she hoped, should the subject be again revived, he would likewise undeceive his family with regard to her knowledge of, or participation in his sentiments.

Whilst these reflections occupied her mind, as she sat near the window at which she had been writing, a scene caught her attention from the road, which effectually banished every remembrance of her own
concerns,

concerns, and left her only sensible to emotions of compassion and terror.

A lady and gentleman, driving past in a curricie, and followed by a servant and a child on horseback, had been stopped, at the moment of Clarentine's looking up, by the cries of their little companion, whose horse trotting unguardedly on, had stumbled within twenty yards of the farm house, and with some violence thrown her to the ground.

She was instantly raised, and carried to a bank by the side of the road, where the lady, who had already alighted, was supporting and soothing her, when Clarentine, breathless with eagerness, ran out to offer her services, and to entreat the little sufferer might be carried into the house, till it was known whether she had not received any injury that required immediate attention.

The lady, struck by her appearance, and the benevolent earnestness with which she spoke, looked up at her with extreme surprise, and after a moment's hesitation, thanked her for the offer, and rising with the child in her arms, prepared, as well as the gentleman who had driven

her, to follow whither she chose to lead.

On their entrance into the house they were met by Madame d'Arzele, who from her own window, which was just over that of Clarentine, having likewise beheld the whole transaction, was now on the point of rushing out with the same friendly intentions.

She hurried them all into the parlour; and then, sending for her maid, an experienced attendant upon children, recourse was had to the common application made use of upon such occasions; and in a short time the little girl, being but very slightly hurt, smiled upon her new friends with affectionate gladness, and with far more sensibility than could have been expected from her age, gratefully repeated to them the thanks and apologies the lady dictated to her.

As the two strangers both spoke French very fluently, and seemed particularly charmed by the manners and conversation of Madame d'Arzele, to whom Clarentine willingly resigned the task of entertaining them, it was with evident reluctance they at length rose to depart.

At

At the door, whither Clarentine attended them, they entreated permission to call again; and the lady informing her of her name and abode, added, "that before she and her friend left Sidmouth, she should likewise hope for the honour of seeing them at her own lodging.

Clarentine curtsying in silence, took the direction that was offered her, and the next minute, the curriple being brought to the door, they lifted the interesting little girl into it, and placing themselves on each side her, drove her away.

"Eh bien," cried Madame d'Arzele, when Clarentine went back to her, "comment trouvez-vous notre inconnue? Elle a un petit *minois de fantaisie* qui me plait beaucoup; et en conversation, piquante et enjouée me paroît remplie d'esprit et d'agrément."*

Clarentine smiled, and answered, "If I honestly confess, that I was more struck by the expression of sincerity and goodness that marked the countenance of the gentleman, than by the sparkling vivacity

* "Well, what is your opinion of our pretty stranger? Her comic little countenance pleased me extremely, as well as the gaiety and spirit of her conversation."

of his brilliant companion, what will you say to me?"

"That your taste is more solid than my own, and that in all probability you are perfectly right: but shew me their card."

Clarentine did so, and Madame d'Arzele read aloud the names of Admiral Compton, and Mrs. Henry Hertford.

"Admiral!" repeated she, "then, perhaps, Clarentine, he knows your friend Captain Somerset!"

Clarentine shook her head with a look of incredulity, and the tears started into her eyes, which Madame d'Arzele observing, instantly changed the subject; and soon after they were called to dinner.

In the evening, Clarentine, who had not been out for some days, and was anxious, as much as possible, to dissipate her mind, and drive away the melancholy ideas that perpetually obtruded themselves, obtained Madame d'Arzele's permission to take Pauline with her, and set out on a walk towards the sea side.

Upon their arrival at the beach, not finding any company there, Clarentine
seated

seated herself upon the edge of a small boat, which had lately been drawn out of the water to undergo some repairs, whilst her little friend wandering about in search of shells and weeds, found a species of interest and amusement in attending to the occupation of a party of poor fishermen, who, immediately opposite to the station she had chosen, were busily employed in dragging up their nets; and whose distant voices, as they were occasionally raised or depressed, taught her how to judge of their success, or how to pity their disappointment.

Whilst engaged in this contemplation, time insensibly stole on, and the sun had already been set some minutes before Clarentine recollected the hour, or thought of returning; rising at length, however, and looking round for her young companion, what was her surprise to see her advancing with a gentleman who held her hand, and whom, as they drew nearer, she discovered to be Mr. Eltham.

Hastening forward the moment he caught her eye, and gaily addressing her—"Oh, that I were a poet," exclaimed he "to celebrate, as it deserves,

this romantic scene, and the lovely sea-nymph that contributes so much to embellish it !

Clarentine, to whom, since she was grown hopeless of ever revisiting Delmington herself, the sight of any one she had formerly known there afforded a sort of melancholy gratification, now beheld Mr. Eltham with more pleasure than she had ever before experienced, and smiling at the flightiness with which he began the conversation, rallied him upon his unfashionable gallantry, and expressed her wonder at seeing him thus unexpectedly at Sidmouth.

Delighted at a reception that partook so little of the frigid solemnity that had hitherto marked her conduct towards him, and construing this change into a favourable omen, Eltham, in high good humour, as they proceeded towards the farmhouse, at which Clarentine resided, began an account of his journey, and of the motives that had prompted him to undertake it ; the principle one of which, he very seriously averred, was *ill-health*, and the great desire he had to try sea-bathing, and change of air !

Clarentine,

Clarentine, half tempted to laugh at an assertion, his looks and whole appearance so directly contradicted, yet judging it best not to betray her incredulity, compelled herself to express some degree of concern upon the occasion; and then, giving a different turn to the conversation, asked him how long it was since he had seen any of the family at Delmington.

“ I was there yesterday,” answered he, “ and had the pleasure of a short tête-à-tête with Mrs. Harrington, by whom I was received.”

“ Did you see no one else? neither Lady Julia, nor Sophia?” “ Oh yes; they both came down before I went away. The latter had been sitting with her brother, who is now sufficiently recovered to bear reading aloud, and, I believe, begins to walk about his room. I was not admitted to him of course: but I hear he looks extremely ill, and is low-spirited to a degree that renders him absolutely nervous.”

Clarentine sighed at this melancholy information, and for some minutes, there was a mutual and total silence. Eltham,

at length, however, addressing her again, said—

“ Have you formed any acquaintance, Miss Delmington, since you came here? Do you go out at all?”

“ No, scarcely ever, unless it is to walk with the children.”

“ You know none of the people then in this neighbourhood?”

“ Yes, one lady there is, whom accident introduced to us. Her name is Hertford; she is a married woman, and was accompanied by a gentleman who being much older than herself, is probably either her uncle, or her father.”

“ And this gentleman,” cried Eltham, with some earnestness, “ what is *he* called?”

“ Compton!” answered Clarentine.—“ Admiral Compton.”—“ The very woman!” exclaimed Eltham, with a wicked, though half suppressed laugh.—“ Poor Harry Hertford’s widow! And so, Miss Delmington,” continued he, “ you tell me this lady is at Sidmouth? Pray, how often have you seen her?”

“ Only once,” answered Clarentine. “ But pray tell *me* likewise, what you know

know about her, and why you laughed, when I spoke of her?"

"Aye," cried he. "First, however, let me ask, did you like her?"

"That is nothing to the purpose," answered Clarentine; "if I say I did, it will probably prevent your giving me the account I solicit; and if I say I did *not*, it might lead you to be more severe than you would otherwise think right.—Excuse my speaking of her, therefore, at all."

"I do assure you," cried he, after a moment's reflection, resuming a graver look, "these scruples are very unnecessary. I know nothing of the lady that ought to be seriously construed to her disadvantage; and if you could tell me where she lodges, I would go and pay my respects to her and the Admiral to-morrow."

"I have no right then," cried Clarentine, "to enquire further, nor do I mean it. Only this, Mr. Eltham, let me say; if you believe, or have any just reason to suspect Mrs. Hertford is not in every respect a proper acquaintance for Madame d'Arzele, you do very wrong to deny it; since,

since, without any injury to the lady's reputation, you might put her on her guard against contracting an intimacy, which, at some future period, she may have reason to repent: as for *me*, I shall not long be in any danger of meeting her; nor, if I were, do I think the world would be so severe upon me, as upon a defenceless young foreigner in Madame d'Arzele's situation, destitute as she is of advocates, and utterly unknown as are her principles and character. Tell me therefore honestly, Mr. Eltham, without entering into any detail, is Mrs. Hertford such a woman as, had you a sister, you would introduce to that sister's acquaintance?"

Eltham paused a moment; looked irresolute, and embarrassed; but at length frankly answered—"She is *not*!"

"Enough," cried Clarentine gratefully, "you may rely upon my discretion, and rest assured that so far from seeking to know more, I will never mention her name to you again."

"You will oblige me," returned Eltham; "now therefore let us drop the subject."

Then

Then adverting to what she had said concerning her speedy removal from Sidmouth, he enquired how soon she purposed going?

“ I wait,” answered Clarentine, “ for letters from town, without which I can decide nothing.”

“ Do you think then of fixing in London?”

“ I will be plain with you, Mr. Eltham,” replied Clarentine, with a good-humoured smile; “ there is one subject upon which I have promised not to question *you*, and it would oblige me particularly, were you, upon this, not to question *me*.”

“ I am silenced!” cried Eltham — “ Pardon a curiosity so unlicensed, and assure yourself, I will suffer it to distress you no more.”

“ Then all is well,” said Clarentine, “ and as we are bound to mutual forbearance upon these two articles, let us endeavour to outvie each other in the strictness with which we perform our engagements.”

“ Remember, however,” cried Eltham, laughing, “ that fair as this compact seems,

seems, mine is, by much, the hardest part; since you cannot possibly be so much interested upon the subject of Mrs. Hertford, as every man must be upon that of Miss Delmington."

"If this were indeed the case," returned Clarentine, "still, I can see nothing in it, that would not be perfectly just. Upon every occasion the most difficult task has always been assigned to the man; and were you now to be exempted from this general rule, where would be the merit of adhering to your agreement?"

They had by this time reached the house, and Madame d'Arzele coming out to meet them, Eltham was prevented from making any reply.

That lady, though surprised as much as Clarentine had been by his unexpected appearance, received him with great politeness, and looked, as she really felt, extremely glad to see him. The animation, and originality of his character, had rendered him, even upon so short an acquaintance, a considerable favourite with her; and the extraordinary good breeding with which he conducted himself towards her, joined to a very fascinating and elegant

gant addrefs, all confpired to make her more partial to him, than to any of the other men ſhe had ſeen, ſince her refidence in England. It is true, ſhe had admired the diſtinguiſhed deportment of Sir Edgar, and been ſtruck by the intelligence and expreſſion that characterized his countenance : but ignorant as ſhe was of its cauſe, the reſerve which frequently caſt a gloom over his features, and the cold gravity, that whilſt it ſeemed intended to reſtreſs chearfulneſs in others, appeared likewise to denote an unſocial and contemptuous diſpoſition in himſelf, had often diſpleaſed her extremely, and led her, very naturally, to ſuſpect him of a degree of arrogance and pride, which at every period of life would have been offensive, but in ſo young a man, was peculiarly diſgusting. She was not aware, that what ſhe miſtook for ſuperciliousneſs, was merely the effect of inquietude ; and that, had his heart been at eaſe, and all his painful diſtruſts at an end, the native ſweetneſs of his temper would have ſhone forth with luſtre, and converted into unqualified admirers, the very perſons who now ſhrunk at his approach, and dreaded
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the apprehended severity of his criticism and his observation.

It being almost dark when Clarentine and Eltham entered, Madame d'Arzele immediately called for candles; and then, having obtained his promise to spend the remainder of the evening with them, apologized for leaving the room, and went up, as was her constant practice, to see her children put to bed.

Clarentine, as soon as she was gone, placed herself at the table, and began working; whilst Eltham, conversing upon indifferent subjects, walked up and down the room, occasionally stopping to look at the books that lay scattered in different parts of it, and then again proceeding forward. After some time, however, Clarentine finding that his perambulation had ceased, and that he stood quite still near the chimney, raised her eyes, and saw him, with the most arch and expressive smile, holding Mrs. Hertford's card in his hand, and attentively examining it. This over, without being conscious he had excited observation, he carelessly replaced it, and resumed his walk, still wearing the same look of malicious significance.

For

For the contempt thus plainly manifested, and the singularity of Eltham's whole behaviour with regard to this lady, it is now time to account.

The last year of his being at Westminster school, having contracted a particular intimacy with one of the scholars named Godfrey, a ward of Admiral Compton's, he used frequently with this young man to be invited to that gentleman's house, and there to spend several days successively. Previous to his becoming acquainted with the family, Charles Godfrey, his friend, who was two or three years older than himself, had conceived a violent passion for the Admiral's niece, Miss Compton, who, at that time, was about twenty, and who had long clandestinely encouraged his love, and most anxiously sought to heighten and increase it. On the first introduction however of young Eltham, whether captivated by the superior elegance of his person, or the still greater superiority of his fortune, is unknown; but, certain it is, she instantly changed her plan, levelled all her powers of attraction against him, and by the flattering attention she paid
him,

him, and the condescending sweetness of her manners, very soon succeeded in making him the secret rival of poor Godfrey.

Thus far, powerfully assisted by her own beauty, and yet more, by the vanity and inexperience of her deluded lover, she found it no very difficult task to persuade him to an elopement, and accordingly, one fine moon light night,

“ When the sweet winds did gently kiss the trees,

“ And they did make no noise,”

taking advantage of the absence of her uncle, whom she was afraid to trust prematurely, but whose pardon she had no doubt of obtaining on her return, they set off together for Scotland, and travelled some miles with uninterrupted speed and facility!

Half way on their journey, however, unhappily for this enterprising lady, Eltham's good genius, in the person of one of his trustees, pursued, and overtook them; in consequence of which, Miss Compton and her maid were sent back to town in the same chaise that had conveyed them from it, and the despairing Mr. Eltham, with his providential deliverer,

verer, took the direct road to Oxford, where he was immediately entered, and left under the care of a very rigid tutor.

During the two first years that he spent at the university, he heard very little, either of Miss Compton, or her uncle. Charles Godfrey, he learnt, was gone abroad, after every art had been unsuccessfully tried by his *quondam* mistress, in order to regain her empire over him, and to extenuate her own conduct. Since then, she had failed in several other attempts to ensure new conquests; and last of all, he was told, she had retired with a distant relation to a small house, belonging to the Admiral, near Portsmouth.

Here she became acquainted with Mr. Hertford, the elder brother of a young Lieutenant in the navy, whom he had left Oxford to pay a visit to, whilst he lay at Spithead. Eltham, who was in the same college, knew him well: but little suspecting what would be the event of his journey, and unwilling to expose either Miss Compton, or himself, he had never mentioned her to him, and saw him no more till he was actually married!

Admiral

Admiral Compton, indulgent as his niece had supposed him, and deficient as he had certainly been in early attention to her conduct, was not only extremely incensed against her, on account of her elopement with Eltham, but also, upon occasion of her marriage with Mr. Hertford. This young man, who was not yet of age, he knew to be the eldest son of a large family, which had been left at his father's death nearly unprovided for, and extremely dependant upon his future kindness. His estate was small, though report had, to his cost, probably made it much greater; and when it came into his possession, the unbounded extravagance of his wife, joined to his own indolence of disposition, compleated his ruin at the end of two years.

They were now obliged to seek a refuge abroad, till their affairs could, in some measure, be arranged. The place they fixed upon for their residence was Switzerland; and here, in his twenty-third year, Mr. Hertford died. Eltham, who was then on his travels, happening to be at Lausanne when his friend was taken ill, went to see him; and after he
was

was no more, though he did not continue visiting his widow, assisted her in a pecuniary way to a large amount, and then cancelling the bonds she had given him, and enclosing them to her with a very polite note, he pursued his journey into Italy.

Eight months now elapsed, during which he heard nothing more of her. At the end of that time, being one night at a ball given by the English Ambassador at Naples, he unexpectedly saw her again, accompanied by a lady, who proved to be the same person she had spent so many months with, previous to her marriage.

Less apprehensive of his own credulity, however specious might be her artifices, and therefore less inclined to avoid her, than whilst he suspected she retained any power over his heart, he boldly stepped up to her, the moment she had taken a seat, and concluding from her appearance in so gay a scene, it would be superfluous to address her in the language of condolence, or solemnity, he began with great gallantry, by reproaching her for suffering one hour to elapse after her arrival at Naples, without sending to inform him
where

where he might have the honour of waiting upon her; and then enquiring what stay she purposed making, without waiting for an answer, he protested in the same breath, he had never seen her look so handsome in her life, and should be utterly inconsolable unless she stood up and danced with him immediately.

Such a *debut*, so easy, so familiar, and unceremonious, Mrs Hertford found extremely disconcerting. Hitherto, accustomed only to view Eltham in the light of an ardent and submissive lover, or of a generous, and respectful friend, (such as he had shewn himself upon the death of her husband,) she was totally unprepared for so sudden a change, and completely at a loss how to treat him. Concluding, however, the wisest policy would be to adopt his own deportment, and manners, and changing as he changed, to accommodate herself to the humour of the moment, her countenance brightened in an instant, and smiling upon him with the most fascinating sweetness, on his urging her again to stand up, she gave him her hand, and readily consented to follow him.

Mrs.

Mrs. Hertford, employing with wonderful ingenuity every art she was mistress of in order to please, animate, and entertain her too-presuming partner, succeeded, once again, before the evening was over, in completely turning his head; he forgot the unfavourable opinion he had lately harboured of her—forgot every impropriety of her past conduct, and sensible only to her allurements, her beauty, the fallies of her wit, and the vivacity of her conversation, he went home fully persuaded he had cruelly injured her, and more passionately in love than ever.

Early the following morning, he repaired to her house; she refused seeing him till evening; but to soften this severity, sent Mrs. Castleton, the lady who lived with her, down to him, to say, that nothing but indisposition, the consequence of her last night's fatigue, should have prevented her admitting him, the moment his name was announced.

Thus irritating his impatience to see her, by delay; and at the same time alarming him, by a false report of her illness, Eltham took his leave, determined, when the evening came, to give up every other
C engagement,

engagement, and dedicate it wholly to her.

Accordingly, at the appointed hour, he again presented himself at her door, and with more parade and ceremony than his impetuosity led him to approve, was conducted through a long suite of apartments on the ground floor, into a very elegant saloon, where surrounded by a numerous circle, chiefly composed of gentlemen, he found Mrs. Hertford, conversing indiscriminately, with equal ease and gaiety, with every individual of her little court, and fixing as irresistibly the attention, as she commanded the homage of the whole room.

At once confounded and amazed at the sight of so brilliant an assembly, after the pathetic description he had heard in the morning of her languor and indisposition, Eltham, with some indignation, stopped irresolute at the entrance of the room, debating within himself whether he should proceed or not.

Whilst thus undetermined, however, a nod of salutation from Mrs. Hertford, accompanied by a most gracious smile, and a motion of the hand that invited him

to approach, put an immediate end to his deliberations, and induced him hastily to advance.

As there happened at that moment to be a vacant seat next her, he took possession of it, and as soon as the first compliments were over, instead of joining in the general conversation, employed himself very deliberately in surveying the different figures that composed the motly group around him, endeavouring by their exterior appearance to form some judgment of their characters and dispositions.

This review, during a short time, afforded him much amusement : but not having any one near him to whom he could communicate his remarks, and finding, though there was much to ridicule, there was but little to interest, he soon grew weary of the cynical part he had chosen, and was turning to begin some trifling conversation with Mrs. Castleton, whilst her friend was talking to a lady near her, when the door unexpectedly opened with great precipitation, and the servant announcing a new visitor, whose name however Eltham could not distinctly hear, a young man of a very elegant de-

portment, made his appearance, and hastening up to Mrs. Hertford, paid his respects to her, with infinite good-breeding, and then, still addressing her in Italian, which seemed to be his native language, apologized for not having obeyed her summons in the morning.

“I was unavoidably detained,” continued he, “by a person who came to me upon business, and whom I found it impossible to dismiss, till after the hour you had done me the honour to appoint. To-morrow, however,” added he, “I hope to be at your orders the whole day.”

This speech, though it was uttered in a low voice, and evidently designed for the ears of Mrs. Hertford only, Eltham, as he sat next her, lost not one word of.

Resentment and mortification at first kept him motionless and silent; but recollecting the various instances he had already known of the habitual duplicity of her character, the temporary illusion he had indulged vanished in a moment, and she appeared to him, once more, such as she really was; an unfeeling and seductive coquette, made up of insincerity and deceit—aiming continually at universal
admiration

admiration and conquest; and as unworthy of exciting, as she was incapable of experiencing, a serious or lasting attachment.

These reflections, which darted across his mind with the rapidity of lightning, left him not an instant in doubt, concerning the resolution he should take. Without seeking any explanation—without making the slightest apology—or betraying the least emotion, he rose with an air of perfect indifference, and wishing Mrs. Hertford good evening, made a general bow to the rest of the party, and walked calmly out of the room; firmly determined never to trust himself within her doors again, nor ever, but as a casual and common acquaintance, to address her hereafter, should chance again throw him in her way.

His residence at Naples, after this useful little lesson, was too short to allow him an opportunity of breaking the wise resolution he had formed. He saw Mrs. Hertford no more: but enquiring among his friends, heard with a mixture of concern and indignation, that the present object of her attention, the young man he

had seen at her house, was already engaged to another lady, a very amiable and lovely woman, whom, since his acquaintance with Mrs. Hertford, he had neglected in the cruellest manner, and it was generally believed, would end by deserting entirely.

The event, however, did not justify this prediction. From what cause her plan failed, Eltham never learnt, but that it proved wholly unsuccessful, and that she had left the place, was the first intelligence he received after he quitted Naples.

Since that period, till his arrival at Sidmouth, he had not even heard her name mentioned, and had almost forgotten her existence; the moment, however, that Clarentine recalled her to his memory, and convinced him beyond a possibility of doubt, that she was actually a resident in the vicinity, a species of curiosity took possession of his mind, which he could neither account for, nor suppress; and which led him immediately to embrace the resolution of seeking her out, and renewing an acquaintance that had been so long interrupted. Yet, though determined upon this plan for himself, the natural
sense

sense of propriety, which, notwithstanding all his flightiness, still remained unextinguished at the bottom of his heart, pointed out to him strongly the necessity of preserving the young and inexperienced Clarentine from forming a connection which might, hereafter, prove so extremely prejudicial to her. It is true, Mrs. Hertford was still visited, and still received by many estimable people; her character had never been publickly attacked, and her situation in the world was such as to place her in the best society: but by those who knew her real history—who might have heard of her conduct towards Charles Godfrey—her subsequent elopement—her many fruitless attempts to ensure an advantageous establishment—her dissipation and extravagance after she married; and finally, the total ruin to which she reduced her husband, by persons well acquainted with all these transactions, what might not be the conclusion drawn, from seeing a young woman come forward, on her first setting out in life, under such auspices? Eltham, who really admired and respected Clarentine more than any one he knew; who adored the

ingenuous simplicity of her manners, and the angelic purity of her mind; Eltham shuddered at the bare idea of her being exposed to the illiberal sarcasms of a censorious and misjudging world, which, guided in its decision by partial appearances, without investigation and without humanity, would, in all probability, include her in every reflection thrown out against Mrs. Hertford, and ascribe to her, irreproachable as she was, the same levity of character, which with so much more justice might be attributed to that lady.

Uninfluenced, therefore, by any ungenerous or vindictive motives, but solely instigated by an honourable desire of being useful to an interesting, and now almost unprotected young female, Eltham acted the part that has already been described, and gave the timely caution Clarentine so gratefully received.

C H A P. IX.

IT was late in the evening before Eltham thought of taking leave, or knew how to tear himself from society which he found, every moment, more and more captivating. In Clarentine, particularly, since the reserve and distance that had formerly repulsed him had given way to greater ease and complacency, he discovered so many attaching qualities, such a noble frankness of disposition, softened by a delicacy so considerate, and a sweetness of temper so truly fascinating, that, although she was at times heavily depressed, and incapable of joining in the conversation, she made a deeper impression upon him, and rendered him a more sincere convert to her merit, than he had ever been before. At his request, on seeing a harp standing in a distant part of the room, she sung and played to him several of the most beautiful little airs she could select, and did it all with an unaffected diffidence, an unpretending modesty, that gave additional charms to the touching softness of her voice and expression.

“ Upon my honour,” exclaimed he, at length, after she had ceased playing, and once more had quietly resumed her work, “ you are the most extraordinary creature I ever met with ! Brought up in such profound retirement ; living in a place from whence all professional excellence was so far removed, and where, consequently, you had as few means of improvement, as incitements to emulation—how, I beseech you—how did you acquire talents so bewitching, and manners so irresistible ? Am I, at last, to believe in all I have heard reported of innate and intuitive endowments ? Am I to suppose you were *born* with all these advantages ? ”

“ You cannot expect a serious answer, Mr. Eltham,” replied Clarentine, laughing, “ to a question so extravagant, and therefore, if you please, we will talk of something rather more rational.”

She then turned the conversation upon the subject of her friend Sophia, and after warmly praising the goodness of her heart, and the sportive gaiety of her disposition, asked Eltham what he thought of her ?

“ Such an enquiry,” replied he, “ coming from a person who is avowedly so partial

tial to her, is hardly fair; however, I will answer you with sincerity and truth; and this I can the more readily do, as my opinion exactly coincides with your own. From the little I saw of her, she appeared to me a very lively, animated, and pleasing girl—totally devoid of either guile, or affectation. Her beauty,” continued he, “is not conspicuous enough to render her, upon a short acquaintance, an object of great attraction; but, I should suppose, she is one of those, who gaining upon the heart by imperceptible gradations, from having *begun* by *entertaining*, would very probably *end*, by seriously *attaching*.”

Clarentine, much pleased with this answer, repeated its substance in French to Madame d'Arzele, who, whilst he was speaking, had been finishing a letter at another table.

“Ah, vous avez bien raison,” cried she, addressing Eltham, “Sophia, avec

“Avez d'esprit pour savoir être aimable,

“Et pas assez pour être insupportable.”

montre tant de zèle quand il s'agit de servir ses amis, a un naturel si heureux,

* Florian.

tant de franchise, et de droiture, quil est impossible de ne pas l'aimer, du moment qu'elle se fait connoître.”*

“ I fancy, my dear madam,” said Eltham archly, “ Monsieur le Chevalier was very much of the same way of thinking. Mademoiselle Sophia appeared to be a great favourite of his.”

“ And consequently,” returned Madame d'Arzele reproachfully, “ you suspect him of being in love with her? Have a little more candour, however, Mr. Eltham; and be assured, it is very possible for a man of honour to find great charms in the society and conversation of an agreeable young woman, without having formed any plan in order to ingratiate himself in her favour; or, (under circumstances so disadvantageous as the Chevalier's) without being in the least influenced by an undue spirit of gallantry.”

Eltham, extremely ashamed of having given cause for such a reproof, received it, however, with great humility, and ear-

* Ah, you are very right. Sophia is so zealous in the service of her friends, has so happy a disposition, and so upright and generous a heart, that it is impossible not to love her, from the moment she makes herself known.”

nestly apologized for the freedom and impertinence that had called it forth. The subject was then dropped, and a different conversation started

When he, at length, had departed, and the two friends were left together, Clarentine related to Madame d'Arzele all that had passed upon the subject of Mrs. Hertford, and ended by entreating her to take the most effectual means, in order to prevent her ever being admitted again.

“ Whatever appearance,” continued she, “ such a denial may have, it is sufficient that we know her to be a woman of an equivocal character, to render it absolutely necessary we should avoid all farther intercourse with her. I am no *prude*,” added she smiling, “ nor in the least apprehensive of being hurt myself by the society of such a person: but I begin already to be afraid of the world, to think of its uncharitable censures with terror, and to dread nothing so much as the danger of falling under its lash. Besides, what opinion could Mr. Eltham himself have of us, if, after the half extorted caution I obtained from him, we were still—”

“ My

“ My dearest Clarentine,” interrupted Madame d’Arzele, “ can you imagine any additional arguments are necessary to convince me of the propriety of all you have said? Be assured, I have not the smallest desire ever to see Mrs. Hertford more; and shall give the strictest charge to my own woman, as well as to the people of the house, positively to deny us both, should curiosity or idleness bring her to this place again.”

Clarentine was perfectly satisfied by such an assurance; and soon after they retired for the night.

Three days now passed, during which they were totally unmolested by their apprehended visitor; Eltham was, however, in that interval, almost a constant guest; seldom quitting them, except at the hour of their meals, or for a short time in an evening, whilst Madame d’Arzele was up stairs with her children, and Clarentine taking her usual walk in the orchard at the back of the house.

Towards the close of the fourth day, whilst thus pursuing her solitary ramble, and perplexing herself with fruitless conjectures relative to the distressing silence
observed

observed by Mr. Lenham, Eltham unexpectedly joined her, and putting into her hand a packet of letters—"I am just returned," cried he, "from the post-house, where, after receiving my own dispatches, I enquired whether there were any for you, and was entrusted with these. At first," continued he, "I felt half tempted not to deliver them till just at the moment of taking leave, lest the business of reading them should employ so much of your time that I might be deprived of the indulgence you have hitherto granted me, and get no music to night; but, upon second thoughts, I persuaded myself you would have more conscience than to reward me so ill for my civility."

"Certainly," replied Clarentine, smiling, "let me, till now, have required what pressing I would, upon such an occasion as this, at least, I am bound to sing at the first word."

So saying, she hastened towards the house, and on entering the parlour, putting a book into Eltham's hand, proceeded impatiently to the examination of her several letters.

The

The first she opened was one from Mr. Lenham, written in terms so friendly and benevolent, that it brought tears into her eyes. He began by informing her, that having lost his wife some months previous to the receipt of her letter, he had lately prevailed upon a female relation of his, and her daughter, to fix their residence with him, and to undertake the entire superintendence of his family. These ladies, he added, though they had not the honour of being acquainted with Miss Delmington, would neglect no means in their power, he was persuaded, to render her abode beneath his roof as comfortable as possible; and he therefore flattered himself, the knowledge of their being his inmates would neither make any alteration in her plan, nor be the occasion of her deferring a journey he looked forward to with so much pleasure.

In compliance with her injunctions, he next, though with evident reluctance, spoke of the conditions upon which she had so positively declared her resolution of *alone* becoming his boarder, and fixing them at the most moderate rate, concluded

cluded by expressing his earnest wishes for her safe and speedy arrival.

“ All then is now settled !” thought Clarentine, with a sigh ; “ my departure is inevitable, and every thing concurs to hasten and facilitate it ! Ah, would I could think of it with the same indifference that those will, who first—”

She stopped, and checking the too ready murmurs that were unconsciously escaping her, turned to the yet unopened letters that lay upon the table, and taking them up, sought by their perusal to divert the painful ideas that had involuntarily obtruded themselves.

Meanwhile Eltham, who had for some time thrown aside his book, and placed immediately opposite to her, sat with his eyes intently riveted upon her face, unsuspectingly observing her as she read, suddenly beheld every muscle in her countenance relax, and the tears stealing slowly down her cheeks, fall in large drops upon the paper that she held.

Inexpressibly affected by such a sight, yet, respecting too much the silent sorrow it betrayed, to disturb her, at that moment, with untimely questions, he waited

waited anxiously till she had ceased reading, before he ventured to approach, or interrogate her.

Softened by the compassionate gentleness of his looks and voice, unused to disguise, and open-hearted as a child, Clarentine, without allowing herself time for reflection, pointed to the letter she had just thrown down, and mournfully answered—

“ Ah! were you to read that, Mr. Eltham, you would no longer wonder at my emotion. It comes from Sir Edgar Delmington, and though calculated upon the whole to give me the highest pleasure, yet in many places it is such as almost to break my heart.”

Thunderstruck by this speech, and far better qualified to comprehend its full meaning than Clarentine was aware, or indeed, had she *been* aware, she was at that instant sufficiently collected to guard against, Eltham changed colour, and losing all command over himself, indignantly exclaimed—

“ And is it possible then, Miss Delmington, that the whining complaints, or the insolent reproaches of a man who has
acted

acted by you such a part, can have any effect upon a mind like yours! Good God! Why read his contemptible letters? Why honour them with so much notice?"

He was proceeding—when struck by the inconceivable amazement he saw depicted in Clarentine's countenance, his own assumed a calmer expression, and with more composure he added—

"But I beg your pardon—I ought not to declare my sentiments so freely, and scarcely know how to excuse the liberty I have taken."

"*Excuse it!*" repeated Clarentine, recovering by degrees from the extreme astonishment she had been thrown into—"That I believe would *indeed* be difficult! But at least *account* for it, Mr. Eltham—explain your meaning—and tell me, I beseech you, how Sir Edgar Delmington can have given rise to this excess of enmity—of injustice!"

"I see," replied Eltham, proudly, "I see plainly, that prejudiced as you are, Miss Delmington, all I can say, (and I acknowledge I have nothing *new* to tell you—nothing which your own integrity would not have taught you to condemn,
but

but for the fatal partiality which has misguided you) will be of no further avail than to heighten your resentment against me, without lessening your good opinion of him. I have gone too far, however, to recede; and therefore, as briefly as I can, I will now give you the *explanation* you demand."

Clarentine, every instant more and more surprised, yet summoned sufficient courage to listen to him with composure, and he thus began—

"Amongst all the various faults that may justly be ascribed to me, that of mean curiosity has never been of the number. You will consequently, Miss Delmington, readily believe me, I hope, when I positively assure you the information by which I was enabled to judge of Sir Edgar's character and conduct was not of my own seeking. He is certainly no favourite of mine, but I knew he was destined to receive the hand of Lady Julia, and neither suspected, nor wished to know more. The day that preceded my arrival at Sidmouth, however, calling, as I had the honour to acquaint you, at Delmington House, I was introduced into a parlour where
alone,

alone, and apparently in no very placid disposition of mind, I found Mrs. Harrington. Extremely at a loss how to keep up, or even *begin* any conversation, and hoping every instant to be relieved by the entrance of some other member of the family I wandered about the room, anxiously seeking, either in the prospect, the furniture or the drawings that hung round it, fresh subjects for remark, and new objects to discourse upon. At length my attention was caught by a very beautiful little sketch, representing a groupe of children at play. I took it down to examine it more nearly, praised it extremely, and asked Mrs. Harrington by whom it had been designed? This was a sufficient signal for her to begin! She told me, with much acrimony, it was by you; and then, with a virulence that defeated its own purpose, began so furious, and to me incomprehensible, a declamation against you, that I listened to her with equal wonder and disgust! To be brief—she concluded this malignant and indecent harangue, by a minute account of every circumstance attending your late nocturnal interview with Sir Edgar; and

summed up the whole, as she grew cooler by reflection, with an earnest request to me, never to make known what I had taken so little pains to learn."

Horror-struck by this cruel, and almost incredible proof of Mrs. Harrington's implacability, Clarentine was some time before she could command her indignation sufficiently to be able to speak with any degree of calmness. At length, however, starting as if from a fearful dream—

"And what purpose, good Heaven!" exclaimed she, "could the relation of such a tale answer? Why publish it at all? and especially, why publish it to you?"

"Certainly," replied Eltham, drily, "not to gratify *my* feelings; and still less, to heighten my opinion of her *own* principles! The chief object she proposed to herself was the indulgence of that determined and inexplicable hatred she seems to have conceived against you—a hatred, which not even the danger she incurred of ruining her favourite scheme, (by making me the confidant of secrets, which, if repeated to Lord Welwyn, might have induced him, at once to withdraw his word), could prevent her giving utterance to.

But

But enough of this intemperate fury—my design was not so much to speak of her, as to exculpate myself from the charge of *injustice* towards Sir Edgar, and to—”

“ Oh, say no more,” interrupted Clarentiné, impatiently, “ say no more, Mr. Eltham, I beseech you! After the account that has been given you, I wonder not at any opinion you may have imbibed, either of Sir Edgar, or of me. Spare yourself, therefore, the needless trouble of adding another syllable in your own justification—and satisfied with the bitter mortification you have made me undergo, have sufficient mercy, at least, not to prolong a conversation so insupportably humiliating!”

Eltham, extremely hurt by this speech, and yet more by the indignant severity with which it was uttered, now with great earnestness exclaimed—

“ You wrong me cruelly, Miss Delmington! you wilfully and utterly misrepresent all I have said! Can you indeed believe, that if the rancorous accusations alledged against you by my officious informant had appeared to me either credible or just, I should have been so wholly

wholly lost to sense and feeling, as to have deliberately selected *you* as the properest person to listen to their repetition?"

"Such a supposition," replied Clarentine, "may have been erroneous: but allowing it was so—allowing, in reality, you had no design to shock and afflict me—still, let me ask, why did you enter into a detail, which at least, you must be sensible, was so unnecessary and so improper?"

"Unnecessary!" repeated Eltham.—
"What! when acquainted with every particular of Sir Edgar's unmanly conduct—when so fully convinced of his worthlessness and perfidy—and when witnessing the ill-deserved sorrow that his letter cost you—was I then to be silent? could I then suppress the indignation I felt awakened against him? You cannot yourself imagine it was possible! Disdain and contempt might, indeed, have kept me for ever silent, could I have been persuaded you regarded him with all the indifference he merits: but when I found his artifices had so well succeeded; when in addition to the unpardonable insult he has offered the unsuspecting Julia, I discovered

covered also that he had undermined *your* peace, won *your* heart, and made himself such an interest there, as neither the conviction of his duplicity, nor the disgrace he has brought upon you, can counteract; I forgot the rigid caution I had sworn to observe, and, at the hazard of incurring your everlasting displeasure, gave way to the almost irresistible impulse that urged me to lay before you my sentiments and opinion: that *either* will be of any avail, I have not, as I said before, the presumption to imagine: but remember, Miss Delmington, that if even among unthinking young men of his own age, whose moral principles, like my own, are far from being at all times strictly consonant to propriety, his late conduct appears so dishonourable; among the graver and more reflecting part of mankind, it will seem too despicable to leave you any excuse for still harbouring an attachment so every way unworthy of you!"

"And what ground have you to believe, Sir," said Clarentine, quite sickened at the strange infatuation which led every body to conclude her heart was so deeply engaged, "that the attachment

you impute to me really exists? You have hitherto heard but *one* side of the question; be pleased, now, to read Sir Edgar's own letter, and then judge whether its contents are such as would be addressed to a very partial or a very tender mistress."

Eltham, surprised beyond all measure at this unexpected trust, scarcely knew whether to accept it or not; observing, however, that Clarentine was serious in her proposal, he, at length, though not without some confusion, took the letter from her, and read as follows:

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, July —.

"Once more then, my beloved, my much injured Clarentine! once more I am permitted to address you! Saved—almost miraculously saved, from the jaws of death, by what act more pleasing to Heaven can I testify my gratitude for this unhopèd for preservation, than by humbling myself before *her* whom I have so cruelly wronged, and by seeking to obtain forgiveness from a being so upright, and so pure!

"Start

“ Start not then, my gentle friend, at sight of this, I fear, unwelcome hand; think not again that I will shock you by professions I know you hold in such abhorrence! Alas! though my heart is unchanged, my reason now tells me, I have forfeited, and must renounce for ever all right, henceforward, to renew them! I have exposed you, if not to ruin, at least to banishment and indignity; the part I have performed, artificial as it was—contrary to my own sense of right, my own principles and judgment—that dissembling and disgraceful part, bringing with it its own punishment, has involved me in a depth of misery, of self-reproach, from which no time, perhaps, will ever rescue me! Oh, Clarentine! condemn me as you will—think of me with what severity you may; but, at least, when anger gives place to milder sentiments, when your first resentment is appeased, pity and compassionate me!—*You*, I hope, may yet be happy; for you are tortured by no internal condemnation; you are exempted from all regret, and have neither shame nor love to contend with. Ah! may you never experience

such love as mine has been—and may shame, as now, be for ever a stranger to your blameless and ingenuous mind.

“ But why, inflexible, and indignant as you, no doubt, still remain—why do I thus wander from the original purpose of this letter, and trespass so long upon your patience? Am I *now* writing to the partial friend of my childhood—the indulgent companion of my earliest years? Am I *now* at liberty, as in happier times, to pour forth every secret of my heart—to expect you will participate in my feelings—share in, or soften my afflictions? No; I am addressing an inexorable judge, one whose last words still vibrate in my ears; who bade me *renounce and forget her*; who cruelly and sternly told me, that, “ were I openly privileged to offer her my hand; were all other obstacles to our union removed, her *own* repugnance to it could NEVER be surmounted !”

“ Oh Clarentine ! Sweet partaker of all my infant happiness—sole object upon whom, for so many years, have rested all my hopes of future felicity—sister of my heart, disposer of my fate ! is it thus then,

we

we are at length to part? Is it thus my fairest prospects are to be blasted? my life, my whole remaining life to be embittered? Ah! tell me; to what is it you sacrifice me? to a mistaken notion of honour? a false principle of rectitude? or is it, as I have but too often, with shuddering apprehension, dreaded, is it that in reality some fearful antipathy, some unconquerable aversion impells you to a deed of so much inhumanity, and irresistibly drives you from me? Your anger, your bitterest reproaches I may have deserved; but your HATRED, Clarentine! Good God! can I have merited that? The idea is terrible! Oh deign, at least, to mitigate its horror by *one* line of comfort, one softening, one alleviating sentence, and I will submit to any thing, even to the rigour of a repulse so firm, and so decisive!

“ Again, however, am I deviating from the plain path I had prescribed to myself. My design, dearest Clarentine, was simply to have supplicated your pardon; not to have renewed my offences; and briefly to have acquainted you with the final result of the painful deliberation to which so

many hours of my long and melancholy confinement has been dedicated.

“ The very instant I am emancipated from the irksome restraint under which it is still thought necessary to detain me, I shall hasten from this house, and return to Oxford. My heart however strongly urges me, previous to that journey, to undertake another—to visit Sidmouth, and bid a long farewell to all its most values, most prizes upon earth! yet this unspeakable gratification—this last and precious indulgence I must forego. The consequences to myself would be too perilous; since, were I again to see you, all my resolution might forsake me—all my impracticable and visionary projects might revive, and upon being, as they infallibly must, succeeded by fresh disappointment, might leave me with even less fortitude, if possible, than now to sustain it, a prey to still greater anguish than any I have yet experienced.

“ Hear then, dearest Clarentine, my fixed and latest determination. Conscious that I no longer possess a right to act for myself, that by my own indiscretion I have utterly forfeited every claim to
this

this inestimable privilege, I purpose immediately writing to Lord Welwyn; and, if not as a reparation for my ingratitude, at least as a proof of my repentance, faithfully laying before him an exact account of the actual state of my heart, and of the tumultuous passions by which it has been misguided. Let him then decide for himself. If I appear to him wholly undeserving of pardon; if the duplicity which, in circumstances so trying, I reluctantly permitted myself to use, seems too grossly offensive, and revolts too strongly against his principles and feelings—if, in short, he concludes me utterly unworthy of the honour he once intended me, I shall at least have conducted myself, upon *this* occasion, as became me, and have made one step towards reconciling myself to my own conscience, and effacing the stain, but too justly, affixed to my character. My debts likewise, and all that bears any reference to the pecuniary embarrassments in which, by my own folly, I have been involved, shall with equal frankness be acknowledged; I can bear—I will submit to no further concealments; and should even the severest reception be

given to an avowal so unexpected, should the most disdainful rejection of me, *for ever*, be the consequence—certain, however, that the *worst* is known, and that all disguise may be finally thrown off, I shall once more be able to look up in the face of day, grieved for the past, but fearless of the future—and exult in the consciousness of having nothing more to apprehend, or conceal!

“ Far from imagining, however, that this tardy disclosure will be sufficient, instantly, to blot out all my errors, and to give me an immediate right to aspire to a distinction I have hitherto so slightly prized, I fully expect, nay *wish* Lord Welwyn should make trial of my sincerity, should give me time before he comes to any final resolution, to render myself more deserving of his favour, and to obliterate the remembrance of the indignity I have so unworthily offered his amiable daughter. Oh! may her distrust never be awakened by knowing with what indifference, not to say repugnance, I have till now looked forward to an union, which either respectfully, I ought at first to have declined—or joyfully, to have
at

at once accepted!—My heart tells me, indeed, that to love *her* as I have ardently, fervently adored *Clarentine*, will never be in my power: but gratitude, honour, justice, all urge me to declare, that if *now*, or *ever*, fate should make her mine, the chief study of my life will be how best to promote her happiness, and justify her confidence. Steadily, diligently, to this end, must I however fly you! What serenity could I hope to regain—what resolution expect to preserve, were the passion—the yet unextinguished passion it would then be my duty to eradicate, daily—hourly fed, by seeing, by conversing with its object! No; rather let me banish myself from your presence eternally—renounce your society, shun your sight as my greatest bane; since, far easier shall I find it, to support with resignation a *total absence*, than with impunity to permit myself the dangerous indulgence of a few occasional meetings, calculated only to enfeeble and destroy me.

“ And now, my Clarentine, what remains for me to add? Shall I call for your congratulations that, at length, I have

gained courage to form such plans? or shall I again sue for your pity, that what seems so cruel—so contrary to all my better hopes—should thus unavoidably be necessary? Oh tell me, at least, that you approve my purpose—that, if scrupulously pursued, it will restore me to your esteem—and doubt not for one instant my firmness, my perseverance!

“ I dare take of you no leave, but with a heart overflowing with the tenderest wishes for your welfare and happiness, subscribe myself sincerely yours,

“ EDGAR DELMINGTON.”

“ Well, Sir,” said Clarentine, when Eltham had read, and returned to her, this letter, “ what is your opinion of Sir Edgar now? I flatter myself you will think with me, that he has fixed upon the noblest, and most effectual method of atoning for the past, and of ensuring that forgiveness from Lord Welwyn he is so anxious to obtain. Oh, then, deny him not any longer, Mr. Eltham, the esteem to which he has so justly entitled himself! and if, hitherto, you have thought of him
with

with unkindness, prove your own candour, by a generous recantation!"

"My dearest Miss Delmington," replied Eltham with warmth, "I needed not such an admonition to stimulate me to repent every offensive expression I may have used—every indelicate accusation I may have brought forward, in the course of this conversation. I see," continued he, "that you are an angel! Your firmness I admire, your conduct I revere; and for nothing more strongly do I likewise (permit me to say it) love you, than for the unmerited gentleness with which you have this instant addressed me. As for Sir Edgar, I equally pity and applaud him; and, I assure you, give him credit for far greater self command, nay, even *heroism*, than almost any other young man, attached to such an object, and in such a situation of mind, could have displayed."

"By proportioning his merit to the supposed difficulty he may have found in resigning *me*," said Clarentine smiling, "you take from me all power to pursue the subject; else, delighted as I am with the general tenour of his letter, with the

openness, the spirit, that breathes in it almost throughout, I could have dwelt upon his praises for ever!"

"And do you not fear," cried Eltham, "that if so warm in his commendation, I shall again relapse into incredulity and suspicion? again discredit your pretended impartiality, and accuse you of coquetish artifice?"

"O, no," replied Clarentine, gaily, "seconded by this incontrovertible, though silent voucher," pointing to Sir Edgar's letter, "I can fear nothing, and may safely defy your utmost malice."

Here the entrance of Madame d'Arzele put an end to the conversation; and Clarentine, her mind lightened of half its cares, more chearful and more easy than for a single moment she had hitherto felt since her arrival at Sidmouth, soon after complied with the pressing entreaties of Eltham, and accepting his offer of bringing to her her harp, which stood, as usual, at the further end of the room, played over to him all his favourite airs, and alternately singing, or conversing, evinced, during the remainder of the evening, a degree

degree of animation, as new to him as it was enchanting.

Once whilst she was employed in tuning the instrument, and at the same time gaily talking to Madame d'Arzele, who had been rallying her upon the happy power she seemed, exclusively, to possess, of rendering Mr. Eltham attentive and quiet, he suddenly approached her, and, with that, (almost *startling*) energy which was so common to him when any thing occasioned his being particularly earnest, abruptly exclaimed—

“ Shall I never know, Miss Delmington, what most to guard against when in your presence? One moment, beholding you depressed and unhappy, though grieved you should have cause, I still persuade myself that in any other situation of mind you would be less fascinating, less dangerous; yet, the next instant, if your natural vivacity returns, far from finding this the case, you seem to acquire with it fresh powers of seduction!”

Clarentine, not more astonished than offended at this extraordinary speech, blushed extremely, and turning from him with undissembled vexation, answered—

“ Upon

“ Upon my word, Mr. Eltham, such language is too ridiculous ! Every strange flight that comes into your head you permit yourself indiscriminately to utter, and perfectly indifferent whether you give pleasure or pain, often occasion real, though I hope unintentional distress to your auditors.”

“ Nay, do not,” cried Eltham, attempting, but ineffectually, to take her hand, “ do not be seriously displeased. Must we always be at variance ? perpetually at war ?”

“ That, Sir,” replied Clarentine gravely, “ depends wholly upon yourself. Be assured, however, that I will never listen to such exaggerated compliments without taking the liberty, very freely, to express my disapprobation of them.”

Eltham would still have rallied her into sentiments of greater indulgence : but though calm, she was firm in keeping to what she had said ; and the matter, to her infinite relief, was soon dropt.

It being late when this little dialogue ended, and Eltham knowing Madame d'Arzele commonly retired early, shortly after took leave, and repaired to his own lodging.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING communicated to Madame d'Arzele the preceding night the contents, as well of Mr. Lenham's, as of Sir Edgar's letter, Clarentine shut herself up the next morning, to give Lady Delmington, through the medium of Sophia, a general account of both, to solicit her directions concerning the fittest time, and properest method of undertaking her approaching journey, and to assure Sir Edgar, though not in an answer immediately addressed to himself, of the cordial and sincere approbation with which she had read the detail of his laudable and excellent plan.

Scarcely was this task completed, when Mr. Eltham, who regularly called every day about an hour after breakfast, either to attend Clarentine and her friend, if
they

they walked—to sit and read to them if their domestic engagements kept them in the house; or, if he could do neither, to romp and amuse himself with the children; sent one of them up to reproach Clarentine for staying at home when the weather was so fine, and to press her earnestly to put on her cloak, and hasten down immediately.

With this request, unwilling herself to lose such a delightful morning, Clarentine readily complied; and taking the two little girls with her, as their mother just then wished to be excused going, gaily sallied forth.

They had not however proceeded far, though the children, active and fearless, were already out of sight, when, at the very moment, Clarentine partly laughed, and partly teized into compliance, had accepted Eltham's arm, they were met by Mrs. Hertford, and the little stranger who had before accompanied her.

She knew, and instantly accosted them; enquired of Clarentine how her charming friend did? apologized for not having sooner called upon them to repeat her thanks for their civility; and then added,

“ I left

“ I left home this morning, however, merely with that design: but as I would not on any account, Miss Delmington, be the occasion of shortening, or retarding your walk, and am not sensible of the least fatigue, I will make half my visit to you while you stay out, and half after you return home.”

By no means delighted at this intimation, and amazed that any one whom she was conscious of having received so coldly should condescend thus strangely to force herself upon her, Clarentine only bowed, and soon after they all moved on; Eltham by his countenance and silence betraying his vexation; Mrs. Hertford by her scrutinizing observation testifying her curiosity; and Clarentine by her blushes and hesitation evincing her confusion.

After a short and extremely irksome walk, sensible that the longer she protracted her return, the longer she should be exposed to the embarrassing looks of her unwelcome companion, Clarentine proposed going home, and, still closely followed by Mrs. Hertford, the next minute directed her steps towards the house.

The

The surprize of Madame d'Arzele, on seeing her come back so soon, and come back in such society, was evident and extreme. She looked by turns at each of the party for an explanation; seemed as if she scarcely knew what to say, and, in a very short time, sunk into such total silence, that Clarentine, ill disposed as she felt for such a task, was obliged to take upon herself the whole weight of the conversation; Eltham not chusing to bear any part in it, and Mrs. Hertford herself appearing to think that as the *visitor*, not the *visited*, she likewise might be exempted from making any effort to support it.

The entrance of the children at length afforded Clarentine some relief. Unconscious of their own power, how often in similar circumstances—when conversation fails—the mistress of the house is languid, and her guests completely wearied, do these innocent and happy little beings bring unexpected comfort; reanimate the mother's face; dissipate the stranger's gloom; and, by diverting their attention from each other, restore a whole party to cheerfulness and ease.

Such

Such now, in some measure, happily proved the case. Mrs. Hertford, though she scarcely noticed the children themselves, smiled at, and commented on the pains Eltham took to make them riotous ; and Madame d'Arzele and Clarentine, in their endeavours to keep them quiet, found, if not an agreeable, at least a lasting source of occupation.

The diversion, however, thus gladly embraced, though it tended to beguile, soon lost its power to charm away the time ; and Clarentine, who from the moment of her entrance had never ceased wondering what could detain her, scarce ever experienced more satisfaction than when at length Mrs. Hertford rose to depart.

She was attended to the door by Eltham, whom she there kept a considerable time in conversation, and to whom Clarentine, as she was returning to the parlour, heard her say—

“ And how long, Sir, have you been acquainted with these ladies ? ”

“ Really,” answered Eltham, “ I cannot be very accurate as to the exact time : but why do you enquire ? ”

“ Because,”

“ Because,” replied she, “ it appears rather extraordinary you should never have mentioned them during the frequent visits you have paid at our house since your arrival.”

“ Why, my dear madam,” cried Eltham, gaily, “ do you think me so superlatively dull, that I can find nothing better to entertain *one* pretty woman with, than encomiums upon *another* ?”

“ I am to infer then,” said Mrs. Hertford, with quickness, “ that to *speak* of Miss Delmington, and to *praise* her, is, with you, the same thing ?”

“ Infer, my dearest creature,” answered he, carelessly, “ what you please, but ask me no more questions, I intreat; since (pardon me for saying it) I know you too well to suppose they can either be the result of *chance*, or entirely the effect of *benevolence* !”

Frightened at this daring speech, and dreading to hear its answer, Clarentine now hastily threw open the garden door, and ran into it to avoid, while they continued talking so near the parlour, the possibility of catching another word.

“ Good

“ Good God ! what must the woman be, “ thought she, “ to whom Eltham permits himself to hold such language ? What could be her reason, with so little to say, for making us so long a visit ? Or why, finding us so remiss in attention to her, visit us at all ? I do not understand it ; but I much fear, if Eltham talks to her in the same strain much longer, he will make her the irreconcilable enemy of us both ! ”

Then recollecting her situation when met by Mrs. Hertford — leaning upon Eltham’s arm — the children, as if purposely, detached from them — and he her only companion ; she blamed herself severely for ever having walked out with him unaccompanied by Madame d’Arzele, and trembled at the opinion such a story, if maliciously reported, might give rise to at Delmington. It now also for the first time occurred to her, that it was wrong to permit Eltham such free and continual access into their house. Though by his own undefining behaviour, his ease, and good humour, she had been taught almost to forget how lately he had been introduced to her, it was yet but too true

true that he was still only the acquaintance of a day—had no family connection, no relationship with her whatever—and that neither his age, or the profligacy imputed to his character, rendered him a fit intimate for a young woman in circumstances such as her's. Had not Mrs. Harrington already, with the most envenomed rancour, aspersed and vilified her? and would she not, happy in such an opportunity, seize with avidity every fresh occasion of pouring upon her abuse and odium?

“ Alas!” cried she, “ I forgot, or rather till this minute I never was aware, that independent of those evils brought on by our own misconduct, there are others, almost equally dreadful, which are solely the result of our inexperience and want of foresight. Eltham's conversation, whilst confined as it hitherto has been to vague and general subjects, was pleasant to me, and I fancied also, allowable. Polished without affectation, entertaining without sarcasm, and easy without impertinence, I flatter myself, both being free from all design, that we might safely, whilst residing in the same vicinity, asso-
ciate

ciate with each other. Too late, however, I have discovered my error; and fatal, if this Mrs. Hertford is as illiberal as she is mysterious, fatal may it prove to me!"

Terrified by this apprehension, and angry with Eltham for having so much contributed to expose her to conjecture, by unnecessarily keeping secret his knowledge of her, although, as was now apparent, a constant visitor at Mrs. Hertford's, she determined in future to keep out of his way as much as possible; to check his assiduities by every means in her power; and above all, earnestly to attempt limiting the number of his visits, and the length of their duration.

Whilst yet occupied in framing plans such as these, Eltham himself joined her, and as he advanced, anxiously called out—

"What, my dearest Miss Delmington, makes you look so thoughtful and so grave?"

Clarentine, unwilling at first to confess to him the cause, looked embarrassed, and hesitated so long what to answer, that
concluding

concluding her seriousness was the mere effect of accident, he forbore making any further enquiries, and taking her hand, said—

“Come, you want a little dissipation; suppose therefore, we now resume our walk?”

“No indeed!” cried Clarentine hastily, “I will neither go out with you again to-day, nor, if I can help it, any other day.”

“No?” exclaimed he, much surprised, “And why?”

“I would tell you,” answered she, more calmly, “but that I fear your representations, although determined not to suffer myself to be influenced by them.”

“Vain indeed should I be,” resumed Eltham, evidently picqued by this declaration, “if, after hearing a determination so candid, you hazarded any of the expostulations you so causelessly apprehend. Explain yourself freely, therefore, Miss Delmington.”

“I will,” said Clarentine, affecting not to seem conscious of his displeasure, you

may remember, Sir, that when I parted from my friends at Delmington, and first came to this place, our acquaintance was scarcely of a week's standing, and in itself of so flight a nature, and so accidentally began that no one could have wondered, had it stopped there, should we mutually have disclaimed any thing beyond the mere knowledge of each other's names and faces. This being the case, what would Lady, Delmington, what would Mrs. Harrington conclude, were they to hear, that she, who so lately was almost an entire stranger to you, now authorized your daily attendance at all hours ; wandered about the country with you without any other companion ; received you early, and detained you late ; and was never seen but in your society ? I might say, very safely, that your visits are not more meant for me than for Madame d'Arzele : but still, knowing as I do, how seldom she is able, or willing to be of our continual excursions, how much when *you* are below, *she* sits above, and how frequently we have been seen without her, I should find this, I fear, a very insufficient plea, and be extremely ill-prepared to answer all the

objections that might be made to it. My request to you, therefore, is, Sir, that for the few days I remain here, you will either make your visits shorter and less constant or, without being offended, and imagining I mean to shew you any *personal* disrespect that you will permit me, when you call to walk out, as formerly by myself, or to sit quietly up-stairs in my own room, and leave to Madame d'Arzele the ceremony of receiving you."

Never was astonishment equal to that which restrained Eltham from interrupting this frank, and, to him, extraordinary speech. He looked at her for some time as if doubting the reality of what he had heard, and was preparing to answer her with great irascibility, when recollecting there might be as much of sudden fear as of established dislike in what she had said he instantly changed his purpose, and hoping to make some advantage of the consternation she had been thrown into eagerly exclaimed—

"I will consent to any thing, renounce every thing, provided you will but promise, on your arrival in town, to take o
th

this fearful interdiction, and permit me to see, and to visit you there, as if it had never passed !”

“ I will make,” cried Clarentine, offended and amazed in her turn, “ no such promise ! you cannot have any right, Mr. Eltham, to exact it ; nor to suppose, that in the hope of ensuring a temporary good, I should voluntarily bring upon myself a lasting evil !”

“ Why, what an arbitrary little despot you are !” cried he, endeavouring under a semblance of gaiety to disguise the mortification and anger a refusal so steady had given rise to ; “ disdaining all compromise, rejecting all conditions, what a very tyrant you are become !”

“ I am sorry, Sir,” said Clarentine, with greater mildness, “ you compelled me to it ; as we know each other’s sentiments, however, now, there can be no further necessity for my stay, and therefore I shall wish you good morning.”

“ Why whither are you then going ?”

“ To my own room, Sir. I have a letter to finish before the post goes out, and no time, I believe, to lose.”

She then hastily left him, while ye too much confounded to have power to stop her, and ran up stairs.

C H A P. II.

WHEN Clarentine and Madame d'Arzele met at dinner, the former, with her accustomed sincerity, related all that had passed in her own mind previous to her conference with Eltham, as well as the particulars and result of that conference itself. When she had ended her account

“ I may, perhaps,” added she, “ have been rather too plain with him : but it is impossible to recollect the strange engagement into which he would have persuaded me to enter, without wondering he should not himself have foreseen the resort it must occasion.”

“ From any one else, my dear Clarentine,” said Madame d'Arzele, he *would* have foreseen it : but you and I have treated him with too much indulgence

have literally spoilt him. I am glad, therefore, with all my heart you have had the courage to put a little check upon him; and by no means sorry to find the wearisome length of his never-ending visits is likely to be somewhat moderated; though as the more ostensible *mistress of the house*, I could never have permitted myself to give him such a hint, without running the risk of offending him for life."

Then recurring to what Clarentine had said relating to her fears, lest the misrepresentations, Mrs. Hertford's prying curiosity shewed her so fully prepared to make, should reach Delmington, and gain credit there, Madame d'Arzels besought her to explain her reasons for having, as she supposed, invited her in; and gave the most ludicrous account of the consternation and dismay with which she saw her enter.

Clarentine readily satisfied her as to the share she had borne in that transaction, and briefly informed her of every particular that had attended their meeting; after which, by mutual consent, a different subject was started, and both sought, as much as it was in their power, to drive

the unpleasant occurrences of the morning from their thoughts.

The whole afternoon and evening passed, and Eltham never appeared; the succeeding day elapsed, and still his absence continued. Clarentine then began to be frightened, and half wished—lest in trying to avert *one* evil she had brought upon herself *another*, and made him an enemy who had before been a friend—she had either spoken more cautiously, or wholly foreborn speaking at all, contenting herself with avoiding him without assigning any reason for it. Yet this, impracticable, and self-willed as he was, she believed would have been almost impossible; since go whither she would, unless formally prohibited, he would have insisted upon following her, and deny him as often as she pleased, he would have called again the next hour. Discarding, therefore, all useless repinings, and convinced in her own mind, that however impolitic, what she had done was, at least, candid and honest, she acquitted herself of any wrong intentions, and determined quietly to await the event.

A letter

A letter from Sophia, which arrived the following morning, contributed more than ever to confirm her in these sentiments, and to relieve her from all remaining uneasiness respecting what had passed.

That affectionate, and excellent girl, began in Lady Delmington's as well as her own name, by thanking her most warmly for the confidence and kindness with which she had acknowledged to them her receipt of Sir Edgar's letter; and for the unreserved and satisfactory account she had given of its contents. Her mother, she added, since its communication no longer appeared the same woman; all her doubts banished, all her alarm subsided; and in consequence, she had fully authorized Sophia to inform her, that henceforward, every objection to her writing publicly and openly to the whole family, and to Lady Julia also, was for ever at an end.

Speaking next of her brother, she said he was to set out for Oxford the following week; having within the last four or five days amended so rapidly, that it was no longer deemed necessary to delay his journey.

“ Instead of writing, however,” proceeded she, “ as he told you he would, he yesterday had a long, and I doubt not most interesting conference with Lord Welwyn himself, who kindly called in the course of the morning to enquire personally after him. I have not heard the particulars of what passed between them: but if I may judge by my brother’s recruited spirits, and by his Lordship’s own cordiality at parting, they were only such as to give us all satisfaction and comfort.

“ Besides, Edgar, who used so sedulously to avoid Lady Julia, now seizes every opportunity of throwing himself, without affectation, in her way; and for *him*, really makes a very assiduous courtier; a change her Ladyship appears by no means either displeased with, or insensible to!”

“ But *apropos* to Lady Julia, my dear Clarentine, she complains much of your determined silence, and seems extremely hurt by it. Pray write to her very soon. She knows of your impending journey, and has been told *whom* you are to live with, and why you leave us, which, (according to *our* account) is because—let me

me see; I have almost forgot my lesson! —O, because Mr. Lenham himself desired it; and Mr. Lenham was the great friend of the late Mrs. Somerset, and may therefore reasonably be supposed to feel much interested about her favourite niece and early *protégée*.

“ Now remember you do not spoil this pretty story, by telling more than you ought to do! I assure you it cost *us* much trouble and pains to invent.

“ But stop—before I proceed further, let me acquaint you with a piece of good news, which will, I know, rejoice you. Edgar has acknowledged all his debts, as he no doubt informed you was his design, (though you prudently forbore touching upon *that* subject in your joint letter to my mother and me) not only to Lord Welwyn, but to her also; and she, (my mother) confessing as much to Mrs. Harrington, that incomprehensible person, in a fit of, scarce credible, munificence, undertook to discharge them entirely herself, as a testimony of the high approbation with which she honours his present conduct. Now tell me, if you dare, that miracles are over!

“ With regard, my love, to the directions you ask concerning your journey, my mother is of opinion you ought by no means to travel so far alone, and has therefore devised what, I hope, you will think a very comfortable method of obviating this difficulty.

“ Our good and worthy old house-keeper, Mrs. Newnham, has a daughter in London whom she has long been very anxious to visit. My mother knowing this, and at the same time being thoroughly satisfied she could not entrust you to a properer person, has commissioned me to tell you, that if, on Monday next, you can proceed as far as Exeter with Madame d’Arzele’s woman, Mrs. Newnham shall meet you there, at the principal inn, and travel on with you the rest of the way. Write therefore immediately to Mr. Lenham to inform him of this arrangement—an arrangement which, however *you* may, and, I flatter myself, *will* approve—it grieves *me* to be obliged, with such methodical *sang-froid*, to write about.

“ I read to Edgar the friendly little message you sent to him, and he seemed much gratified and affected by it: yet,
like

like a true encroacher, could not help confessing he should have been still better pleased had it been written immediately to *himself*. So, however, would *not* my mother; and therefore it is quite as well as it is.

“ But my dearest Clarentine, I must now bid you farewell. I shall write to you again very soon, and hope to hear from you as early as you can after your arrival in London.

“ Heaven bless and preserve you—grant you a safe and pleasant journey—a cordial reception—good spirits and good health!

“ Adieu; and believe me with the truest and warmest affection,

“ Yours ever,

“ S. DELMINGTON.”

P. S. “ O, but I had almost forgot! It is reported here, by one of his own men, whom he lately sent back to Welwyn Park, that the sage, the modest, the humble Mr Eltham, has taken a lodging, at Sidmouth, *close to yours*—that he walks out *tete-à-tete* with you every day—that in an evening you spend whole hours singing and playing to him—and

finally, that he almost *lives* at your house! Take care, take care, my dearest girl! scandal and defamation are very prevalent in these evil days, and many are the evil tongues you have to guard against! —Send Eltham about his business as soon as you can—and if he must visit you, give my compliments to him, and tell him to wait till you get to Mr. Lenham's; for Madame d'Arzele is *beaucoup trop jeune et jolie*, to make a proper Duenna for you! —Adieu!"

Painfully meditating upon its contents, Clarentine yet held this letter in her hand, when Eltham himself opened the parlour door, and entered. He had taken a circuit on purpose to come in at the back part of the house unseen by the ladies, and, in his way, meeting with no one to announce him, (a ceremony indeed he had of late seldom given himself the trouble to observe) had proceeded boldly forward till he reached the usual sitting room, where he, very justly, concluded himself secure of finding the object of his search.

He

He was beginning, though in a tone less gay and animated than usual, to address her, when Clarentine, abruptly starting up—the caution she had so recently received giving additional celerity to her motions, flew towards an opposite door with a view of making her escape, without uttering a syllable.

Eltham, however, saw her design, and springing after her, in astonishment inexpressible, he took her hand, and as he led her back, fixing his penetrating eyes upon her downcast face, with a mixture of curiosity and resentment—

“ Good God !” he exclaimed, “ whence this inconceivable, this extraordinary behaviour? Do I dream? or are you really the same Miss Delmington—the same friendly, amiable and unaffected creature, who so lately welcomed my approach with smiles and with good humour?—Who—

“ Mr. Eltham,” interrupted Clarentine, struggling to disengage her hand, “ let me pass I beseech you !—if you are offended, if I appear capricious and ill-bred, I am sorry for it: but I have reasons, indispensable reasons for what I do,
and

and cannot suffer you to detain me an instant longer!"

"Is it possible then, you should imagine," cried Eltham, still opposing her retreat, and steadfastly gazing at her—"I can part with you whilst in a state of such suspense? For worlds would I not neglect this opportunity, the *only* one you may ever again afford me, of bringing you to an explanation; of enquiring into the true cause of a change so sudden, and so mortifying! Have I not punctually, scrupulously observed your last injunctions? Abstained three whole days from venturing near the house? and can you still wish to fly me? still drive me from you?"

Clarentine, ashamed, distressed, and irresolute, hung down her head in total silence, unable, without acknowledging it was to the advice of Sophia her increased reserve was owing, to account for a conduct, she could not but allow he had so much reason to be displeased with; and equally unable to frame any other excuse that should appear at all plausible to a man whose penetration she so much dreaded,

dreaded, and whose enquiries were so pointed.

Whilst with averted looks, therefore, thus hesitating and thus confused she stood, Eltham still vainly urging her to speak, a sudden end was put to her difficulties and deliberations, by the abrupt appearance of the maid of the house, who, half opening the door called out—

“ Miss—a lady—”

and immediately drawing back, gave place to Mrs. Hertford, who the next moment hastily entered.

Eltham, at this sight, muttering between his teeth an indistinct imprecation, and instantly dropping the reluctant hand he had so long detained, bowed coldly and stiffly to the fair intruder, and walked sullenly to the window; whilst Clarentine scarcely less provoked, and infinitely more abashed, stammered, blushed, and looked so guilty and so conscious, that an observer of far less discernment, or far greater candour than Mrs. Hertford, might very naturally have put the same construction upon what she saw, which that lady instantly, and unhesitatingly, thought

thought she was authorized to put upon it herself.

Dissembling her sentiments however, and approaching Clarentine with perfect ease and composure, she took her hand with the intimacy of established friendship, and enquiring, in a tone of far greater complacency than that in which she had addressed her during her last visit, after Madame d'Arzele, then added, without waiting for an answer—

“ I understand, my dear Miss Delmington, you are upon the point of quitting Sidmouth as well as myself; will you therefore excuse the liberty I take, if I venture to enquire how you propose travelling, and whether it would be agreeable to you to accept a seat in my uncle's carriage, in preference to undertaking the journey alone?”

The extreme surprise this unexpected proposal excited; the sudden start it occasioned from Eltham, and the rapid succession of new ideas to which it gave rise in Clarentine, had the happiest effect upon her spirits; and instantly dissipating every trace of that painful embarrassment under
which

which she had, the moment before, so severely laboured, revived and reanimated her sufficiently, to enable her, the next minute, without pause or hesitation, firmly, but, at the same time, with extreme good breeding to answer—

“ Your offer, madam, does me infinite honour, and I should have accepted it with great pleasure, had I not this very morning received a letter from Delmington, containing the fullest directions, as well concerning the time at which I am to set out, as the companion with whom I am to travel, and the exact route we are to take.”

“ And when, then, may I ask,” cried Eltham, abruptly turning round, “ do you set out?”

Clarentine, by no means anxious to answer this enquiry, attempted to turn it off with a laugh, and gaily replied—

“ You and I have been quarrelling this morning, you know, Mr. Eltham; and therefore, as a little punishment for your curiosity, I shall take advantage of our not having yet *made it up*, and like children in the same circumstances, *turn sulky*, and refuse to answer you.”

“ An

“ An admirable expedient !” cried he, “ I give you infinite credit for its ingenuity ! This is what may truly be called *turning a quarrel to good account*. Pray where did you learn this politic art ?”

“ *Necessity*, I suppose, taught it me,” answered Clarentine laughing, “ for it is not one of those qualifications I should be willing to ascribe to *Nature*.”

“ Consider then, how much you are indebted to *me*, as the prime agent of this all-inspiring necessity, for calling forth such talents !”

“ About as much,” resumed Clarentine with quickness, “ as any other persecuted being is, to the tormentor that stimulates its exertions by first awakening its fears !”

“ I may then really triumph in the certainty of having made you afraid of me ?”

“ Not absolutely ; since I can yet only do you the honour to acknowledge that you are the *cause*, but by no means the *object* of my fears ?”

Then observing that Mrs. Hertford sat listening to all that passed with the most earnest attention, she felt anxious to give an immediate turn to the conversation ;
and

and for that purpose addressing herself to her, without giving Eltham time to pursue the subject, she said—

“ May I take the liberty, madam, of asking how you first heard of my intended removal? I should be curious to know who it is, that in this place thinks so insignificant a being as I am of sufficient consequence, to take the trouble of enquiring into any of my actions.”

“ My intelligence,” answered Mrs. Hertford, “ was not procured here, but came immediately from London, in a letter I yesterday received from Miss Barclay, the young lady, who, with her mother, now resides at Mr. Lenham’s.”

Amazed to find her so well acquainted with names she had always so carefully avoided mentioning, either before her or Eltham, Clarentine, unable to command her first emotion, hastily exclaimed—

“ Good God!”

Then, as suddenly recollecting herself, with more composure added, “ You are well acquainted with Miss Barclay then, madam? Is she amiable?”

“ Yes, extremely,” answered Mrs. Hertford.

“ And

“ And pray,” resumed Clarentine, hesitating and fearful, yet anxious, before she herself became a member of it, to know exactly upon what footing Mrs. Hertford was in Mr. Lenham’s family; “ Pray, madam, may I without impertinence enquire, whether you have been intimate long with this young lady, and whether you are also acquainted with the excellent Mr. Lenham?”

“ With the latter,” answered Mrs. Hertford, “ but very slightly. Mrs. Castleton, a particular friend of mine, has a boy, the brother of that little girl you have seen with me here, under his care, and when she has called to see the child, I have occasionally accompanied her, and by that means obtained a trifling knowledge of him. With Miss Barclay, however, I have been in habits of confidence, and in constant correspondence these four or five years.”

This answer, circumstantial as it was, still but imperfectly satisfied Clarentine. There were yet a thousand questions she wished to ask, a thousand doubts she longed to have explained, which, however, her delicacy and fear of offending withheld

withheld her from uttering. That a woman, whom Eltham allowed himself to excite such suspicions of, to whom he ventured to speak so cavalierly, and who to Clarentine herself appeared so ill-formed to excite a lasting friendship ; that such a woman should be the chosen inmate of so near a relation of the respectable Mr. Lenham's, seemed incomprehensible ! Much, however, did the circumstance, extraordinary as it was, tend to eradicate, or at least diminish, the prejudice she had hitherto harboured against her ; and naturally candid, disposed to see every thing in the most favourable light ; and, as all ingenuous minds are, averse to crediting the *worst* in a *doubtful* case, she persuaded herself to believe, that Eltham had either been grossly misinformed, or else influenced by private pique in all that he had insinuated.

When therefore, after a visit, like both her former ones, of considerable length, Mrs. Hertford rose to take leave ; Clarentine, whose feeling and excellent heart reproached her for her past coldness, and urged her to make reparation for it, went up to her, and with infinite sweetness re-
newing

newing her thanks for the obliging offer that had brought her, apologized for never having waited upon her during the time she had been at Sidmouth, and expressed great concern that it would now, owing to the shortness of her stay, be wholly out of her power.

“ I hope then,” said Mrs. Hertford, with a look that shewed her much pleased, “ you will make me amends when you get to town ? ”

So saying, she made something between a *bow* and a *curtsey* to Eltham, shook hands with Clarentine, left her compliments for Madame d'Arzele, and with an air of even girlish vivacity, hastened away.

The moment she was gone, Eltham, as it was evident, would have poured upon Clarentine a torrent of questions, not wholly unmixed with reproaches for a reception his pride still so much resented, had she allowed him opportunity ; but aware of his design, and equally averse to hearing either the one, or the other, she industriously evaded giving him any satisfactory information, and fought by so many little artifices to elude his interrogatories

tories, and give the conversation a general turn, that although he could not again, with any appearance of reason, complain of her, as she neither testified any peculiar anxiety to escape from him, or any degree of reserve that could in common sense offend him, he very soon lost all patience, and determined upon quitting her, to seek elsewhere that intelligence, which every instant encreased his desire of obtaining.

As soon as he had left her, hastening up to Madame d'Arzele to consult with her about the plan mentioned by Sophia, relative to her journey as far as Exeter, and to solicit her acquiescence to it, she, the next minute, sat down, first to inform Lady Delmington of the success of her application, and then, to apprise Mr. Lenham of the exact time at which he might expect her. With regard to the charge, however, concerning Eltham, as she wished to discuss that subject with Sophia only, and was by no means certain her mother knew of the reports that had been circulated respecting him, she deferred saying any thing that could lead to that circumstance, as well as writing to
Lady

Lady Julia, till after her arrival in London; when for the one she would have more leisure, and for the other more materials.

C H A P. III.

THE morning at length arrived, so much dreaded by Madame d'Arzele, and so dejectedly anticipated by Clarentine, which after a residence together that had been productive of so much comfort to both that had so closely united them to each other, and established a habit of confidence between them so grateful to their hearts, was destined to separate and divide them. They parted with tears on both sides; and with the sincerest expressions of attachment, earnestly renewed their mutual promises of writing with punctuality and diligence.

At Exeter, whither Clarentine was conveyed in less than three hours, she found the good Mrs. Newnham, who had slept there the preceding night, in readiness, &
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the Inn door, to receive and welcome her. They repaired together into the house, where, after taking some refreshment, Clarentine hastily wrote a few lines to thank Madame d'Arzele for the attendance of her woman; whom, sending for into the parlour, she very generously rewarded for her trouble, and then dismissed, with a thousand kind messages to her mistress, and a thousand affectionate remembrances to the children.

When this business was concluded, she turned to Mrs. Newnham, and telling her she was ready to set out, asked how they were to travel.

“My Lady's opinion ma'am,” answered Mrs. Newnham, “was, that your safest method, as you have no man servant to attend you, would be, to wait here till the Plymouth stage arrives, and if there is room, to proceed the rest of the way, or at least as far as Salisbury in that; there, if you find yourself fatigued, we may sleep to-night, and continue our journey in the coach that sets out from thence, to-morrow.”

Clarentine immediately agreed to this plan; and on enquiry, finding the stage

was expected in every minute, held herself in readiness to get into it, and desired the waiters would let her know as soon as it arrived.

Whilst this was passing, Mrs. Newnham had been giving orders in the passage concerning the baggage she had brought with her; and was standing to see it all conveyed down stairs out of her own room, whither she had insisted upon its being deposited the night before; when Clarentine, drawn to the door by the noise and bustle of this removal, stared with amazement at the number of trunks and boxes she beheld, and hastily exclaimed—

“Why, my dear Mrs. Newnham, you have made preparations for a very long absence! What stay do you purpose to make in London?”

“Bless you, ma’am!” cried the good woman, “these things are not a quarter of them mine; they chiefly belong to you.”

“To me!” thought Clarentine, sighing, “Ah! then, I am an *outcast* indeed!”

She drew nearer to the place where they stood, however, and examining the
direc-

directions, saw, with increased concern, as a proof of the long exile to which she was doomed, that they were actually almost all addressed to her, in Lady Delmington's own hand, at the Rev. Mr. Lenham's, and by their size and number seemed to contain not only her books, the repeated gifts of Mr. Somerset, but every thing else of any value she had left behind her.

The sight, from the croud of distressing reflections to which it gave birth, made her melancholy, and turning away with an aching heart, she went back into the room, where, perceiving a newspaper lying upon the window seat, she took it up till the coach arrived, and sat down to look it over.

One of the first articles that caught her attention was the following :—

“A few days ago died, at his seat in Northamptonshire, Thomas Somerset, Esq. Member of Parliament for Higham Ferrers, and one of the wealthiest private gentlemen in the county. His son, a very gallant and distinguished young officer in the navy, and sole heir to all his father's property, is shortly ex-

pected in England, after a long station in the West Indies."

Though it is not to be supposed the news of a man's death by whom she had been so cruelly neglected, whose general character was so unamiable, and who had long been such a stranger to her sight, could very deeply affect her, yet, as all expected intelligence of mortality usually does, at the first moment, it shocked, if it did not grieve her, and led to such a train of mournful reflections upon the subject of all the infantine connections she had thus early lost; that, depressed as she was before, the tears started into her eyes, and she laid the paper down unable to proceed.

The entrance into the inn yard of the coach she had been expecting now, however, afforded her some relief, and by directing her attention to the more immediate concerns of the moment, contributed to dissipate the sadness with which she was oppressed. Mrs. Newnham instantly hastened out to speak to the driver, and to endeavour to secure the two vacant places she required; which having happily effected, she presently returned
to

to announce her success to her young fellow-traveller; with whom, in a short time afterwards, she ascended the carriage, and drove away.

Loaded as it was with *outside* passengers, fortunately for Clarentine, it contained but one in the *inside*, except herself and Mrs. Newnham. That one, in appearance scarcely superior to a common sailor, coarse, rough and sturdy, was yet, to his present companions, at least, perfectly inoffensive; seeming far more inclined to sleep than to intrude upon them his conversation; and, after the first *full stare* with which (not without betraying some indications of surprise and complacency) he favoured Clarentine, evincing no further inclination to observe or molest her.

Becoming, therefore, shortly familiarized to his uncouth aspect, which, on her first entrance, had startled and almost terrified her, Clarentine, whose thoughts now again involuntarily reverted to the intelligence respecting Mr. Somerset she had so accidentally met with, communicated it in a low voice to Mrs. Newnham, and expressed the deepest concern for the

melancholy surprise, that, on his return after so long an absence, awaited his son; a son, she added, who, however unlike his father, would still, she was persuaded, feel the sincerest sorrow at a death so sudden and so unexpected.

To this, Mrs. Newnham, although a good and a well-principled woman, found some difficulty to agree; not thinking it possible, nay, even natural, that the best of sons should experience any real grief at the loss of such a father.

“ You know not, my dear Miss Clarentine,” continued she, “ you know not what shocking accounts I have heard of his selfishness, his illiberality, and his total want of affection; nor how often I have been assured that, but for his pay as being in the navy, Captain Somerset—”

At the mention of Somerset's name, the sailor who sat opposite to Clarentine, and who for some time had been lounging back in the coach, his eyes entirely closed, his arms folded, and his head reclined upon his breast, as if sunk in a heavy stupor, suddenly bent forward with a look of mingled incredulity and amazement,

ment, and earnestly fixing Mrs. Newnham, bluntly exclaimed—

“What’s that—what’s all that there you’re faying? Do *you* know Capt. Somerset?”

“Yes,” answered she, half smiling, “I do know **one** Capt. Somerset, but perhaps not the **same** you mean.”

“Was his name William?” enquired the sailor, “was he Commander of the —— man of war?”

“He was,” replied Mrs Newnham.

“Why then, by jingo!” resumed he, rubbing his hands with an air of infinite glee, “I’ve got into right good sort of company! Captain Somerset’s was the first ship I ever went on board of, and a plaguy time I thought I should have on’t, for I was no younker even then, but a great lubberly lout that knew no more of the matter than an infant, and expected a cat o’-nine-tails acrofs my back every instant. Ne’ertheless, he bore with me kindly and patiently; gave me time to learn my business, and encouragement to do my duty—and has made me take such a liking to a seaman’s life, that as long as

there's a ship afloat, I'll ne'er turn my mind to any other."

Clarentine, much pleased with the honest frankness she began to discover in her new acquaintance, and happy to embrace such an opportunity of learning a few of the particulars of Somerset's professional conduct, now joined in the conversation, and without discovering her near affinity to him, obtained from her communicative companion an account, that affected as much as it delighted her. The character he gave of his late Commander, (for he began by saying he was no longer in Capt. Somerset's ship,) was that of a man equally remarkable for humanity and for courage; one who in the midst of danger was dauntless and collected; in the hour of success, placable and generous; and in the day of security, mild, patient, and considerate.

Praise such as this—so zealous, yet so disinterested, drew tears from Clarentine's eyes; increased, if possible, the esteem, admiration, and affection she had always felt for its object; and made her proud of acknowledging her connection with a man whose virtues, she thought, reflected
such

such honour upon all who were allied to him.

The first instant she spoke, confessed herself to be so well acquainted with Somerset, so nearly related to him, the voice, demeanour, and whole countenance of the pleased, yet astonished sailor, underwent a total revolution. Respect and deference took the place of his former roughness and familiarity; he seemed from that moment to look upon her with a species of benevolent affection, and never afterwards addressed her but with the humblest civility and gentleness.

At M——, where they stopped to dine, and where also their fellow-traveller took leave of them, Clarentine and Mrs Newnham had scarcely alighted and advanced three steps towards the room that was allotted to them, when, from above, in an accent equally well known to both, a man's voice was heard impatiently calling out—

“Waiter! send my servant up to me, I have been ringing for him this half hour.”

“O, Good God!” softly exclaimed Clarentine, precipitating her pace as she

spoke, and mechanically seizing hold of Mrs. Newnham's arm, "Mr. Eltham is here! For the world I would not have him see me!"

The evil, however, was already done. Eltham, whilst leaning over the banisters, had caught a transient view of her, and flying impetuously down the stairs, reached the room she meant to take refuge in almost at the same instant she entered it herself.

"So, my dear Miss Delmington," cried he, triumphantly addressing her, "an accident has for once been my friend, and, notwithstanding your barbarous reserve upon the subject of your journey the last time I had the honour of seeing you, has given me the opportunity I so much wished for, of offering you my services upon the road, and of attending you, (at a distance, however humble,) up to town!"

"I am sorry," said Clarentine coldly, "that Mr. Eltham, who, no doubt, so well knows the value of every obligation he confers, should, upon this occasion, have made choice of one, so ill disposed to ac-
cept

cept his offers, or even to thank him for his intentions, as I am."

"The mortifying ungraciousness of this reply," cried Eltham, attempting to laugh, yet evidently much piqued, "might have succeeded much better some time ago; but of late, Miss Delmington, you have accustomed me so often to the same kind of severity, that I begin to feel *hardened*, and shall very shortly become callous to all reproof whatever."

"That," said Clarentine, "I can easily believe; and only wish it were in my power, with equal facility, to become callous to unprovoked —

Impertinence she would have added, but checking herself in time, left the sentence unfinished, and turned to the window half angry at her own petulance, and half terrified at the effect it might produce.

Before Eltham could speak to her again, however, the servant he had been enquiring for made his appearance, and soon after they both left the room.

"Thank heaven!" said Clarentine, when they were gone, "I now begin to breathe! But, my dear Mrs. Newnham, if you have any pity, endeavour to hasten

our dinner as much as you can, that we may, if possible, get away before Mr. Eltham returns."

Mrs. Newnham, though it was evident she longed to make a thousand observations, and, no doubt also, to ask a thousand questions, immediately obeyed; and as on her re-entrance she was accompanied by a waiter who staid in the room the whole time they were at table, she found it absolutely impossible to utter one direct enquiry; and all others Clarentine easily evaded.

Their hasty meal was scarcely over, when notice was brought that the coach was ready.

Clarentine, eager to be gone, instantly arose, and having discharged the reckoning, hurried out with the utmost expedition, internally congratulating herself upon her good fortune in thus escaping a second interview with Eltham.

At the coach door, however, what was her surprize and chagrin again to behold him!

"Here still?" cried she, with undissembled vexation.

"Yes,"

“ Yes,” replied he, smiling as he handed her in, “ here still !”

Then likewise assisting Mrs. Newnham to mount the steep ladder that served instead of steps, the next moment he ascended after her, and bade the coachman drive on.

“ Drive on ?” repeated Clarentine, “ No, no, impossible ! you do not mean to go with us, Mr. Eltham ?”

“ I do indeed,” returned he, enjoying her consternation, “ my man could procure me no post-horses, and I am in haste to get to town.”

Clarentine every instant more disgusted at his dauntless assurance, and firmly persuaded his station at that inn on her arrival was the effect of a concerted plan, (formed in consequence of his having, by some unknown means, discovered the day on which she meant to quit Sidmouth, and the conveyance by which she was to travel) now determined, in order to prove to him, at least, the seriousness of her resentment, to observe the steadiest silence she could the whole way, and resolutely to avoid giving him any further excuse to provoke, or reproach her.

Eltham,

Eltham, however, was not of a disposition long to suffer her to maintain her purpose. Anxious to learn the cause of the late, and inexplicable change in her behaviour towards him, he began by complaining in the strongest terms of the manifest injustice with which she had treated him — protesting that he was wholly unconscious, when her reserve first began, of having in the slightest degree merited her displeasure; and could no otherwise account for it, than by supposing, she had been prejudiced against him by the family at Delmington, and taught by them to assume that coldness and distrust he so deeply lamented.

To this, though by no means pleased at his harbouring such a suspicion, Clarentine, firm to her first intention, made no reply—and Eltham, after vainly waiting some time for an answer, thus went on—

“As my stay in London will be very short, and I have promised to return to Welwyn park as soon as the shooting season commences, my first business will be, on my arrival there, to get this matter satisfactorily cleared up. Sir Edgar, it is true,” added he, “will not at that
time

time be with his family, but should every other member of it deny the charge, my conjectures will know where to rest, and the affair may easily be decided by means of writing to him to beg he will appoint some convenient place where we can discuss it."

Shocked and amazed at this alarming threat, yet unwilling to believe it could have any serious meaning, Clarentine now found herself compelled to speak, and with great earnestness said—

"Can you then, Mr. Eltham, after the conversation that so lately passed between us on this subject,—when I frankly communicated to you my reasons for requesting you to discontinue your visits at Madame d'Arzele's—can you still be unreasonable enough to require a further vindication? to discredit all I said? and to entertain suspicions so unworthy, and so ill grounded?"

"Had Miss Delmington," replied he coolly, "condescended, after that conversation, to account for the very extraordinary behaviour that followed it—had she informed me what were her motives, on my next visit, for so abruptly flying my

my presence the instant I entered the house—had she, in short, uniformly treated me with candour and openness, those doubts, those suspicions, had never been excited. As it is—since by persuasion and entreaty I have so ill succeeded, I must either apply elsewhere, or determine to persecute and haunt her, till, in *self-defence*, she is compelled to answer me.”

Then observing that poor Mrs. Newnham, notwithstanding the eager curiosity with which she had attended to the opening of this dialogue, had now, however, overpowered by fatigue, fallen into a profound sleep, he lowered his voice, and thus, with a significant smile, continued—

“ Were I permitted to advise in such a case, I would caution my dear Miss Delmington not to persevere too long in her present plan, lest, driving me to extremities, she should urge me to declare open war against her, and at once to proclaim myself her lover and her persecutor! Aye,” continued he, seeing her start and turn pale, “ you may look frightened, but such I protest to you will be the case. I cannot, I *will not* be to
you

you as a common acquaintance! Either then accept me for your friend—restore me to that degree of confidence with which you honoured me during the early period of your residence at Sidmouth, or, as I said before, make me a passionate, but a selfish—a designing lover!”

During this speech, Clarentine, aghast and dismayed, stared with unutterable astonishment at the insulting speaker, who, satisfied with having so unequivocally explained himself, very composedly folded his arms the instant he paused, and threw himself back in his seat, exultingly contemplating the consternation he had occasioned. She recollected, with trembling apprehension, how totally, for the present at least, she was in his power; and dreading still further to irritate him by reproaches, made a faint attempt, though filled with the utmost indignation, to soften and appease him. The words, however, died on her lips; she stammered—hesitated—and the next moment burst into tears.

Eltham at this sight anxiously leaned forward—fixed his eyes on her face with an expression of concern and surprise,
and

and then seizing her hand, passionately exclaimed—

“ Dear, lovely Clarentine! it is yet time to retract! Tell me but that you will forgive me—allow me but to hope my repentance may be followed by your returning friendship, and I here for ever abjure all the cursed menaces I so madly uttered!”

Clarentine, revived by this assurance, now ventured to look up, and smiling through her tears, said—

“ Were *I*, Mr. Eltham, as vindictive as *you* have shewn yourself, I should not so readily pardon the terror and amazement into which you have thrown me. To prove to you, however, the difference there is between us, I accept your terms, and agree to an immediate peace.”

“ This generous forgiveness,” cried Eltham, kissing her hand, “ is, I acknowledge, very ill deserved—but since it not only proves your placability, but ensures my warmest gratitude, let it be as permanent as I hope it is sincere.”

“ You distrust its sincerity, I perceive,” said Clarentine, “ and with some reason, after all the strange things you have uttered;

tered; be assured, however, that upon one only condition, you may securely rely upon the good faith with which I mean to observe our treaty."

"I dare not," replied Eltham, "after the mercy you have exercised towards me, refuse subscribing to that condition, whatever it may be; and yet I almost dread to hear it."

"Believe me," said Clarentine, "you have no cause. It is simply this—that immediately on our arrival at Salisbury, you will order a post-chaise to be ready to-morrow morning to convey you separately the rest of the way to London; and afterwards excuse my seeing you again till I am fixed at Mr. Lenham's. Do not," added she, seeing he hesitated, "do not, I beseech you, deny me so trifling a favour, lest you oblige me to question *your* sincerity, as you appear to have questioned *mine*."

After a short internal deliberation, Eltham, at length, acceded to this compromise, and during the remainder of their route together, the most uninterrupted harmony subsisted between them.

Yet

Yet Clarentine, notwithstanding the temporizing meekness with which she had been reduced to submit to his unpardonable presumption, was not of a disposition to think of it lightly, or lightly to forget it. Retired as had been her past life, she still was sufficiently acquainted with the rules and customs of society, to know how to estimate his conduct; and, at once to perceive and feel its impropriety. That her unprotected state should be such as to expose her so peculiarly to suffer by it, she deeply lamented; and shrunk with timid despondency from a world, in which it was likely her poverty and dependance might lead to a repetition of such humiliating treatment. Still however, she meant punctually to fulfil her promise, and, as she had agreed, occasionally to receive him after her arrival in town; but never when alone, or when unsupported by the presence of some person whose age, or situation, would ensure deference and command respect.

C H A P. IV.

IT was so late when the coach drove into the city of Salisbury, that Clarentine, wearied and dispirited by the reluctant exertions she had made to appear easy and chearful during the latter part of the evening, felt anxious to retire for the night the instant she alighted ; being told, however, that it would take some time to prepare a room for her reception, she submitted to necessity with the best grace she could ; and whilst Mrs. Newnham went up stairs with the chambermaid, to see that every thing was properly arranged, consented, at Eltham's recommendation, to order tea in preference to the more substantial repast that had been set before them : but which she had declined partaking.

Drawing a chair to the side-table on which the tea equipage had been placed, and seating himself opposite to her, Eltham, as soon as the waiter left the room, said —

“ Pray,

“ Pray, Miss Delmington, when is Captain Somerset expected in England ?”

“ Would I could tell !” answered Clarentine with earnestness.

“ You speak feelingly upon the subject,” returned Eltham gravely, “ and yet, you were so young when he last embarked, that you cannot retain much recollection of him ?”

“ Oh, do not think so !” resumed she, with quickness ; “ he left an impression upon my memory never to be erased. Good, noble, and benevolent as he is, who that has once known, can cease to remember, or cease to honour him ?”

Eltham, inexpressibly struck by the energy and warmth with which this was uttered, remained thoughtful and silent for some minutes after she paused, attentively regarding her ; then resuming all his wonted impetuosity, he abruptly cried out—

“ With a heart so alive to sentiments of gratitude and admiration, why—oh, why, cruel Clarentine ! are you thus inaccessible to love ! Tell me,” added he, leaning forward, and fixing her yet more in-

tently, "tell me, why should you drive me from you? Why should we ever part?"

"Mr. Eltham," replied Clarentine, greatly alarmed at this returning vehemence, "is it generous, is it manly, to take advantage of the defenceless situation in which I am now placed, thus to harass and oppress me? Oh, do not force me to hate you! do not oblige me to recall that pardon you seemed so anxious to obtain: and instead of the friend you taught me to expect, compel me to look upon you as the most cruel of enemies!"

"By heaven," exclaimed he, with fervour, "you do me wrong! Friendship—nay, even love itself, were too cold a name by which to express the sentiment I feel for you! I offer you my heart; I dedicate to you my fortune and my life! You are the most fascinating, the most lovely of human beings, and whilst I have breath, I will protect, cherish, and adore you!—Dearest, gentlest Clarentine! do not repulse—do not drive me to desperation!"

Struggling to withdraw her hand, which during this speech, he had seized, and
forcibly

forcibly detained, Clarentine, unable to refrain from tears, dejectedly said—

“ In pity, in humanity, spare me, Mr. Eltham ! I am not in spirits to support all this ; you know not how you wound, how you distress me !—Oh ! had you the feeling heart of that generous, considerate Somerset, you just heard me commemorate, never would you have tortured me by treatment such as this !”

“ Cold-hearted, inhuman girl !” cried he, colouring with resentment, and instantly releasing her, “ What a reproach was that ! Was it thus you answered Delmington’s ardent protestations ? Was it thus you upbraided, scorned, rejected *him* ?—No ; you heard him with compassionating sensibility, wept over his romantic letters, defended him with zeal, and consoled him with kindness ! This, all this you could do for a boy, a fool, who betrayed himself, and you, whilst I—I, who would sacrifice my life to obtain one smile, to gratify the slightest of your wishes—I, who love you even to distraction, am condemned, slighted and disdained ! Oh ! Clarentine,” added he, passionately striking his forehead, and abruptly

ruptly rising, "take care, take care you try me not too much!"

Clarentine now more alarmed than she had yet been, by the outrageous violence of this intemperate madman, afraid of betraying her resentment, and equally afraid of exasperating him by her silence, clasped her hands fervently together, and looking after him with a supplicating aspect, called out in an agony of distress—

"Mr. Eltham, for heaven's sake, for mercy's sake, leave me till you are more composed—leave me for to-night! You will kill me if you stay and thus persevere in terrifying me so cruelly!"

Eltham, however, incapable of attending to, or of answering her, was walking with hurried steps about the room in an agitation of mind too great to be described. His countenance by turns expressive of fierceness, gloom, or disappointment, had lost all traces of that carelessness and good-humour, by which it was usually distinguished. Ashamed of himself, and angry with Clarentine, he knew not how to descend to the necessity of making an apology, with an grace; how to curb his own impetuosity, or how to

attempt retrieving the confidence again thus wantonly forfeited.

Approaching her at length with rather more composure, his voice, however, yet betraying the strongest symptoms of emotion—

“ I have gone,” cried he, “ too far to recede: you *cannot*, a second time, sincerely pardon me; then why should I be so much my own enemy, as to renounce, from a chimerical notion of honour, a false principle of rectitude, which even *you* expect me not now to be guided by, the only chance of happiness I have yet in view, the happiness of confirming your dependance upon me, though I cannot secure your heart!”

“ And would *that*,” cried Clarentine, darting at him an indignant and contemptuous glance, “ would *that* make you happy?”

“ Good God!” exclaimed he, “ what a look was there!—Oh! speak to me again, dear Clarentine—soften to me the rigour of that reproachful glance, and I will do anything, every thing you command! Say you forgive, and though you blame, also pity me, and the conflict shall be at an
end

end, I will tear myself from you ; for in your presence I can neither act uniformly right, or with impunity wrong !”

Clarentine, completely exhausted by the long contest she had sustained, pale, spiritless, and harassed, held out her hand almost mechanically, and leaning her head upon the back of a chair, seemed equally averse either to speaking or looking at him.

He received the cold and passive hand she extended, with rapture, tempered by concern at the evident distress he had occasioned ; and holding it between both his as he spoke, said in a tone of anxiety and tenderness—

“ My dear Miss Delmington, why this total, this solemn silence ? Are you ill ? Tell me, I beseech you !”

Clarentine shook her head, motioned with her hand for him to leave her, but still did not speak ; and Eltham after remaining some minutes longer, irresolutely and fearfully gazing at her, upon her making another signal to him to go, reluctantly obeyed.

It was long ere Clarentine, humbled and depressed by this extraordinary scene,

could conquer the agitation to which it had given rise, or recover any tolerable degree of serenity. The contrition and regret Eltham had evinced at his departure led her, however, to hope she might escape the next day without further molestation; and calmed by this dependence, she fought as much as possible, before the return of Mrs. Newnham, to dissipate all remaining traces of chagrin and vexation.

In a very short time, that good woman appeared. Unsuspicious of what had passed, her questions, though numerous, were such as Clarentine found it easy to answer; who having staid with her whilst she supped, gladly consented the moment she had finished, to follow her to the room that was allotted her.

Having given orders to be called, by the earliest break of day, she arose the next morning, and pursued her journey.

Nothing remarkable occurred during the remainder of the way. Eltham appeared no more; and the travellers who now occupied the coach were of that non-descript order of beings, of whom little is thought, and neither good or bad can be said.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

AT the inn in London where the stage put up, Mr. Lenham himself was waiting to receive and welcome his expected guest.

The mild, placid, and venerable aspect of that excellent man, prepared Clarentine, the instant she beheld him, to reverence and love him as a father. He addressed her with such soothing kindness, and regarded her with such unaffected benevolence, that she could almost have wept her thanks for a cordiality so cheering, and so consolatory.

When the first hurry of a meeting, which to Clarentine at least had been so unexpected, was over, Mr. Lenham, who had kept a hackney-coach in waiting, proposed having it called up, and attending her in it to Hampstead. To this she readily consented; and after taking a friendly leave of Mrs. Newnham, whose daughter resided in that neighbourhood, she cheerfully followed her reverend conductor.

Their conversation, during the ride, turned chiefly upon the subject of Mr. Somerset's sudden death, and the unexpected arrival of his son. The first of these was an event, which, although he affected not deeply to lament, Mr. Lenham acknowledged he had been extremely surprized at, having, but a short time before, seen Mr. Somerset in town in perfect health and unusual good spirits.

"Had he lived, my dear young lady," added the worthy man, "till you were become an inhabitant of my house, I have great reason to believe you would have found in him a zealous and sincere friend. His heart with regard to you seemed totally changed; and the kindness with which he repeatedly spoke of you filled me with the most cheering expectations."

"But to what, dear Sir," said Clarentine, extremely surprized, "could such a change be owing? Many years have elapsed since he last saw me, and he can scarcely have heard me mentioned since his son's departure."

"We all, my young friend," replied Mr. Lenham, "require something to love, some one on whom to bestow that
place

place in our hearts, which the absence of those we most fondly cherish has left vacant and unoccupied. Such," continued he, "was the case with your deceased uncle. He never approved his son's choice of a profession which so wholly counteracted his own views, and so long removed him from his sight; and, till lately, spent every interval between that son's departure and his return, in solitude and repining. By degrees, however, this cheerless retirement became irksome to him; he came oftener to town; mixed more in society; and as the species of misanthropy he had indulged wore off, looked round with anxiety for some object on whom, in his declining days, he could bestow his affection, and rest his hopes of domestic comfort. At that time *you*, Miss Delmington, were brought to his remembrance. I announced to him your intended removal to town; and from the very instant he heard of it, he seemed to be revolving in his own mind the means of obtaining in you that companion he had elsewhere so vainly sought."

Clarentine, as much affected as she was astonished at this account, could not but

sincerely regret, that, at the very time he seemed most favourably disposed towards her, she should thus have been deprived of a relation, whom it would have given her such unspeakable satisfaction to have known, to have loved, and to have been permitted to attend. She reproached herself severely for every harsh expression she might ever have uttered concerning him; and forgetting his long neglect, to think only of his intended kindness, sunk, in her gratitude for what was *designed*, the remembrance of what had been *omitted*.

Whilst these reflections still occupied her mind, and filled it with the truest concern, the carriage stopped at Mr. Lenham's gate, and the coachman having rung, a maid servant ran out with a candle in her hand to light them into the house. Clarentine's heart failed her as the moment drew near that was destined to introduce her to the strangers she was henceforward to reside with; and lingering purposely as she crossed the little court before the door, she stopped at the bottom of the steps, and said with a half smile—

“ It,

“ It is very foolish, but indeed Mr. Lenham I am almost afraid of venturing farther.”

Mr. Lenham laughed at her apprehensions, yet with great kindness said—

“ Shall I go in first then, and announce your arrival ?”

Glad of any reprieve, she eagerly accepted the proposal, and struggling to gain courage during his absence, was able when he returned to accompany him into the room with tolerable composure.

The party to which she was now presented, consisted of Mrs. Barclay, the actual superintendant of the house, her daughter, a neighbouring lady of the name of Denbigh, and a very fine boy of about fourteen, a pupil of Mr. Lenham's, and the eldest of the three he had then under his care.

The usual formalities attending a first introducing being over, Clarentine, when they were all seated, ventured to cast a timid eye around her, and to take a more minute survey, than on her immediate entrance she had dared hazard, of the several individuals before her.

The first who by any singularity distinguished herself, was Miss Barclay. This young lady, who seemed to be about five-and-twenty, and unhappily for her, had some pretensions to beauty, though not of the most feminine kind, looked at once vulgar, blunt and familiar. To a complexion naturally *florid* rather than *brilliant*, she added a pair of large black eyes, which in attempting to render expressive, she had made fierce, and in trying to give archness to, had utterly deprived of all diffidence or softness. Her dress, the laborious result of indefatigable pains and trouble, was at least as far as she knew how to make it so, fashionable even to extravagance; and betrayed such a total want of taste, and an affectation of negligence so evidently studied, that, to Clarentine, who, novice as she was, had never before beheld so extraordinary a figure, she appeared more like a monstrous caricature, intended to excite ridicule and surprise, than any other thing she could compare her to.

With regard to her mother, Mrs. Barclay, little in respect to her exterior, at least, could be said. Her face was uncommonly

commonly plain indeed, but there was nothing strikingly remarkable either in her person or dress. Confined during the greatest part of her life to the country, and compelled whilst there, from the slender circumstances of her deceased husband, to undergo all the rural drudgery of a farmer's wife, she had neither had time, or inclination, to attend to the forms of cultivated society—to enjoy a rational conversation—or to participate in the pleasures of domestic tranquility. Her mind, when at home, had regularly been in one continual *economical ferment*; when abroad, casting all care behind her, she thought only of indemnifying herself, by *jollity* and *frolic*, for the time she had lost, and the fatiguing round of household occupations to which, at other seasons, she had been obliged to submit. Her long seclusion from the world had contracted her ideas; given a species of boisterous roughness to her language and manners; and initiated her into all that idle love of gossip, so usual in a remote village, where the chief recreation of the inhabitants consists in an evening ramble from one neighbour to another, to enquire

into the scandalous anecdotes of the day, comment upon, and exaggerate every circumstance as it is related.

Mrs. Denbigh, their visitor, was a quiet, grave, elderly woman, very simple in her manners, and extremely well-bred in her conversation. Clarentine, however, notwithstanding the apparent gentleness which seemed to characterize her, fancied she could discern in the cast of her eyes a latent propensity to satire, which made her shrink from their investigation, and innocent as was her heart, dread becoming the object of their penetrating scrutiny.

The youth, whose name was Blandford, was the son of a wealthy East Indian. He had been in England about four years, and on his first arrival had been put into a public school; from whence, however, chusing shortly afterwards to run away, he had since been placed by his friends under the care of his present tutor; with whom he had now lived near four years in perfect discipline and order.

Such was the party which Clarentine, on her arrival, found assembled. Revived, and comforted by the attentive kindness

kindness of Mr. Lenham—amused by the novel appearance of Miss Barclay—and rejoiced once more to find herself in a place of security, she very soon forgot her fatigue, and insensibly assumed such an air of cheerfulness and serenity, that her friendly host beheld the change with delight, and felt more than ever disposed to interest himself in her fate—to love, and to protect her.

The lateness of the hour at which the fair traveller arrived, naturally precluded all possibility of entering into any very regular conversation before supper; and whilst they were yet at table, Mrs. Denbigh's servant being announced, in a few minutes she took leave, and the whole party shortly afterwards retired for the night.

The room that had been appropriated to Clarentine, though not very large, she found on waking the next morning, was light, cheerful, and airy. Its windows looked into the garden; beyond which, only separated from it by a sunk-fence, was a meadow, encircled by a gravel walk, and securely sheltered, as well from observation as from cold, by a high and impenetrable

impenetrable hedge. At the back of this room was a large closet, with a bow window, that reached the floor, and opened like a folding door into an old-fashioned balcony, supported by the same pillars that formed a sort of portico before the entrance of the house.

In this closet, which had a fire-place, and a door, (in addition to the one that separated it from her bed-room, which led into the passage, Clarentine, looking round her with delight, anticipated the many happy hours she should spend, when having placed her drawing materials and her books in order, she might wish to escape either from the bustle or restraint which visitors impose.

Whilst yet indulging herself in forming plans such as these, she heard somebody enter the next room, and, turning round, beheld Miss Barclay—

“ Well,” cried that young lady, seating herself as she spoke, and drawing the dressing-glass to the side of the table to reform some error in the set of her cap, “ how did you sleep?—I’m dying for my breakfast—a’n’t you?”

Clarentine,

Clarentine, a little surprized at this easy *debut*, smiled, and said—"I have scarcely had time to think of it yet; I am but just dressed."

"O, nor I neither: but then, you know, when one has been worried up so, it's horrid to be kept waiting. I dare say, however, my uncle won't be ready this half hour, for he's packing up such a load of things!"

"Packing up? where is he going then?"

"Lord, don't you know? A letter came here this morning, before any of us were awake, from some of the people who were present at the opening of Mr. Somerset's will, to say my uncle must go down there directly, for it was found he had been appointed one of the executors, and no business could go on without him."

"I am afraid then," said Clarentine, "we shall not see him again for some time. Will he breakfast with us?"

"O, yes—it's on his account the breakfast is so delayed."

"Then pray," resumed Clarentine, "let us go down; I should wish to see all I can of him before he sets out."

"Lord,"

“ Lord,” said Miss Barclay, indolently rising, and still lingering before the glass, “ one would think he was your lover, by the anxiety you express about him.”

“ I hope,” said Clarentine, - moving towards the door, “ to find in him a *friend*, and that perhaps may be *better* than a *lover*.”

“ I am sure,” cried Miss Barclay—“ I should not think so !”

And with these words, she followed Clarentine out, and leaving the room-door wide open, brushed past her upon the stairs, and ran forward to see if her uncle was come down.

This mixture in the manners of her new companion of the rudeness of an unformed romp, and the freedom of a pert coquette, at once astonished and offended Clarentine so much, that she determined henceforward, however civil and acquiescent she might be when they met below, to discourage, as well by the coldness of her looks, as the whole tenour of her behaviour, the forwardness that led her thus to intrude into her private apartment.

“ And this,” thought she, “ as much for her own sake as mine, since I greatly fear,

fear, I should never have philosophy sufficient to endure her continually in my sight without being sometimes in danger of affronting her.

At the parlour door, she was met by Mr. Lenham—

“ My dear young lady,” said he, taking her hand, “ Lucy has probably acquainted you with the hasty summons I have received. It hurts me, so immediately upon your arrival, to be under the necessity of leaving home : but the business I go upon is of a nature, I trust, to plead with you my excuse.”

“ O, Sir,” said Clarentine, “ if in addition to the thousand other cares that must occupy your mind at such a moment, you were to suffer yourself to be disturbed by one thought relative to *me*, I should be inconsolable. All I have to wish is, that your absence may be short, and that you may return to us in health and spirits.”

“ Thank you, my young friend,” said he—“ the wish is like the speaker—benevolent and kind.

Mrs. Barclay, at that moment entering the room, put an end to the subject, and Mr. Lenham perceiving the chaise already
ready

ready at the door, begged to have the breakfast hastened as much as possible, and the moment it was over rose to depart.

When he was gone, the parlour door was shut, and Mrs. Barclay, who had been in an enormous bustle the whole morning, was seated—

“ Well,” cried she, “ the day’s our own ; we have nobody to stay at home for, or to consult ; so let’s agree where we shall go to-night.—What say you, Miss Clary,” addressing Clarentine, “ to the play ?”

Clarentine stared at this unexpected question, and said, she was afraid, after the death of so near a relation, it would be very improper for her to appear out of mourning ; and at present, she had nothing black to wear—

“ Pshaw,” exclaimed Miss Barclay, “ What’s that signify ? Nobody will know you !”

“ Very true ;” replied Clarentine, mildly, “ but would there not be a want of decency in making the experiment ?”

“ Lord, well—you can send out for a yard or two of black ribbon to put upon
your

your hat; and that, with a white gown, will be quite mourning sufficient, I'm sure. You don't wish to look like a widow!"

"No," said Clarentine, "neither, to be very sincere with you, do I wish to go out at all."

"And in return, to be equally sincere with *you*," said Miss Barclay, forcing a smile, "I fancy, Lady-Fair, you have been a good deal accustomed to have your own way; hav'n't you?"

"No," answered Clarentine, "I have not indeed; and to the prejudice of another, sorry should I be if I ever had. As this is a matter, however, which intirely concerns myself, and it would give me great uneasiness were my determination to influence yours; suffer me, this once, to be guided by my own feelings, and forbear to press the subject further."

"Oh, certainly! Only you will excuse my saying, I think you rather *odd*!"

"Perhaps," returned Clarentine, good-humouredly, "I might be tempted to say the same of *you*, if I knew how to put such an observation into very civil language."

To

To this, Miss Barclay, not comprehending, perhaps, the full extent of her meaning, made no reply, and Clarentine, soon after, went up stairs to write letters, and to unpack her trunks.

These occupations, quick and diligent as she was, employed her till near dinner time, when, at her own door, just as she was going down to beg one of the servants might be sent to the post with her letters, she was met by Miss Barclay, out of breath with speed, who hastily called out—

“ Lord, my dear creature ! there’s one of the most fashionable, handsome young men below, enquiring for you, I ever saw in my life !”

“ For me ?” cried Clarentine, “ and pray what is his name ?”

“ Indeed,” replied her imperfect, but enraptured informant, “ I can’t tell, for the maid blundered it out so, it was impossible to understand her ; however, he came on horseback, and upon one of the finest, spirited animals you ever beheld. Do pray come down.”

So saying, she flew back herself, leaving Clarentine fully persuaded this dazzling

zling equestrian could be no other than Eltham in person. The conviction, however, gave her no sort of eagerness to make her appearance; but on the contrary, (had she been assured, that by delay she could have driven him from the house without seeing him) would have induced her most undoubtedly to have remained where she was till summoned down to dinner; but this she feared it was hopeless, with such a man as Eltham, to expect; and dreading his becoming too well acquainted with the family, lest he should be perpetually at the door, she only stopped to deliver her letters to the maid, and then, however unwillingly, directed her steps towards the parlour.

As she entered, and saw that it was indeed Eltham who waited for her, the recollection of all that had passed at their late meeting recurring most forcibly to her mind, died her cheeks with crimson, and utterly bereft her of either power or inclination to speak.

Not so, the intrepid Eltham. Conscious he might feel, it is true, but far from betraying it, he addressed her with the same unembarrassed gaiety he would have done during

during the first period of their intimacy at Sidmouth;—rallied her upon her gravity, and protested the air of London, short as had been her residence in its vicinity, had begun already to exert its baleful influence over her.

“ Lord, how should it be otherwise?” cried Miss Barclay: “ She has been shut up all day in her own room—won’t go any where even of an evening—and seems determined to mope herself to death!”

“ Alas! my dear madam,” cried Eltham, in a tone of affected commiseration, “ you will find her, I fear, a very untractable creature! I wish you well through it; but as for *me*, I would not undertake the management of her for the world! I never could gain any one point with her in my life!”

“ Try, however,”—resumed Miss Barclay, “ we want her to go to the play to-night, and because she has not got all her mourning ready for an old uncle whom she hardly ever saw—she declares she can’t. Now do you think, Sir, that in a play-house, all among strangers, this could at all signify?”

“Certainly not,” answered Eltham, gravely, “certainly not; but as I told you before, she is utterly impracticable, and therefore I believe it would be best not to contend with her!”

“Well, for my part,” said Miss Barclay, shrugging her shoulders, and looking reproachfully towards Clarentine, “I would not be of so uncomplying a temper for the world!”

“Oh no!” cried Eltham: “With every other privilege that beauty can give, be nobler than your sex, and never, never, dear madam, exert your power with the degree of inflexibility your proud friend has shewn.”

“As for that matter,” cried Mrs. Barclay, who since Clarentine’s entrance had hitherto sat silent, “I don’t know whether it’s her beauty that has made her so or not, but Lucy can sometimes be stubborn and proud as well as her neighbours.”

“Lord, mama, what a speech!” exclaimed Miss Lucy, reddening—

“A mistaken one, I am persuaded,” resumed Eltham; “softness, and complacency are painted in Miss Barclay’s eyes; every

every look speaks tenderness, every motion proclaims"—

"Lord, what rattle!" interrupted Miss Barclay, turning away with an air of consciousness, but at the same time with a laugh, that shewed her by no means offended, "I never heard any body talk so in my life."

Whilst this agreeable conversation, or rather dialogue, was passing, the maid, unchecked by Mrs. Barclay, who was by no means accustomed to observe the formality of retarding so necessary a business till her visitors were gone, had very leisurely been laying the cloth, and preparing every thing for dinner, which she now informed them was ready, and desired to know whether she might bring up? "Oh yes," said her mistress, "call the boys in, and bring it up directly."

Eltham, upon this, directing a very droll look at Clarentine, immediately arose, took a respectful leave of the whole party, and left the house.

"I protest," cried Miss Barclay, who the moment he was gone had flown to the window to see him mount his horse, "it was the rudest thing to let him go just as dinner

dinner was coming up, without asking him to stay, that ever was done."

"Rude or not rude," returned her mother, very composedly taking her seat at table, "I could not invite him to eat hashed mutton with us, and to-day we have nothing better."

"Well, I hope he'll come again, however!—But now I think of it," turning to Clarentine, "pray what is his name?"

"Eltham," answered Clarentine.

"Eltham!" repeated Miss Barclay, with an air of mingled surprise and significance, "*That's* Mr. Eltham, is it? Oh, I have heard of him."

"Why, what have you heard," cried her mother, "Who is he?"

"He's nephew to Lord Welwyn, and an old acquaintance of Mrs. Hertford's, who has written to me a great deal about him."

"What, I suppose," cried Mrs. Barclay, laughing, "he's one of Mrs. Hertford's flirts?"

"Oh, no indeed," resumed the daughter, with quickness, "he's flirting just now with quite a different person."

This speech, which it was impossible Clarentine should misunderstand, more especially as, at the moment it was uttered, Miss Barclay glanced her eyes towards her with an expressive smile, provoked her extremely ; but fearing to bring on a long conversation upon the subject, she thought it best to let it pass, and went on quietly with her dinner.

As soon as they rose from table, the play scheme having been entirely given up, they all walked out into the garden; where Clarentine, much pleased with the ingenuoufness and good-humour, of young Blandford, who attached himself closely to her the whole way, and appeared to feel irresistibly drawn towards her by the sweetness of her countenance, and the gentleness of her manners, remained conversing with him long after the two ladies went back to the house, and where she would gladly have remained yet longer, but for the summons that called her in to tea.

Being determined not to give offence by betraying an over-anxious solicitude to withdraw herself from society, Clarentine, as soon as candles were ordered, brought down her work, and established herself

herself in the parlour for the rest of the evening.

This little proof of *condescension*, as Mrs. Barclay, whose expressions were seldom exactly suited to the importance or insignificance of the subjects she talked upon, termed it, seemed very much to soften that lady's heart in her favour, and to inspire her with a sentiment of infinitely more cordiality and kindness towards her than she had yet felt.

Clarentine sincerely rejoiced to perceive this change, and already disposed, rough and unpolished as she was, extremely to prefer the mother to the daughter, did every thing in her power still more to increase this growing partiality. She read to her, on finding she was distressed for a new maid, every advertisement relative to servants, that the daily papers of the last week contained; heard all she had to say concerning the difficulty of procuring domestics that could be depended upon, with the most exemplary patience; agreed with her in lamenting the dearness of provisions; and in short, so completely entered into all her family afflictions, that though she

nearly talked herself to sleep, she securely established herself, as she had reason to hope, in Mrs. Barclay's good graces.

Meanwhile, Miss Lucy, appearing to think this conversation infinitely beneath her, and fully persuaded Clarentine had engaged in it solely for her own amusement, had, for nobler entertainment, had recourse to a book of little opera songs, which she had some time before bought at the play-house door. These she sat negligently turning over, and humming to herself the whole evening; never, except it was to fix her eyes upon Clarentine with a look of contemptuous pity, or sarcastic surprise, desisting from her employment a moment.

With whatever solicitude she might affect not to perceive these airs, it will easily be supposed, that, industriously as they were persevered in for near three hours, Clarentine could not fail to observe them. The only effect, however, they had upon her mind, was that of leading her sincerely to compassionate her mother—a mother who, unentertaining and uncultivated as she might be, it was still
evident

evident possessed many qualities that rendered her deserving of a better daughter.

C H A P. VI.

THREE days had now elapsed since the departure of Mr. Lenham, and Clarentine, though in that time she had hourly gained ground in the good opinion of Mrs. Barclay, began most impatiently to long for his return, when the following letter from him was brought to her—

MISS DELMINGTON.

Somerset-Hall, July 26.

“ My dear young Friend,

“ The intelligence I have to announce to you, it was my wish to communicate in person, but the probable delays that will protract my return are so numerous, that I cannot any longer—possessing a secret which I think it will give your benevolent heart pleasure to be informed of—permit myself to keep you in ignorance. —

H 3

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Somerset’s will, you have already heard, has been inspected. It was drawn up, as is evident by the date, three years since, and excepting a few trifling legacies to servants, contains nothing that does not relate to his son. In a codicil, however, which was added to it so lately as within four days of his decease, is a declaration stating, that—“ In consideration of Clarentine Delmington’s near affinity to his late wife, the testator gives and bequeaths, to the said Clarentine Delmington, the sum of 5000*l.* the capital of which is to be made over to her without limit or restriction, on the day she comes of age; and in the interval between that period and the present, to be consigned to the management and trust of the Rev. Francis Lenham; whom, in conjunction with his son, William Somerset, he appoints her guardian and trustee. Moreover, that from the day of his decease, the annual interest of the same 5000*l.* amounting to 250*l.* shall be duly paid during her minority to the same Clarentine Delmington, out of his personal property in the five per cents.”

“ Now

“ Now my excellent young friend, suffer me to congratulate you upon this just and equitable donation. To a mind disinterested, and liberal as I was long since taught to believe yours, the value of such an acquisition, as it relates only to yourself, will be small, in comparison to that it must derive as relating to those it may enable you to serve ; since now, although not affluent, you are independent ; and with sufficient to supply all your own reasonable wishes, have something to spare towards the wants—the equally reasonable, and far more pressing, wants of others. How many there are who might envy you this power ! and how many more, I fear, who might envy the disposition which I doubt not will lead you thus to exercise it !

“ But permit me before I conclude, in justice to our absent friend, your guardian now, and always your most zealous well-wisher, to acquaint you with an instance of his early affection which, perhaps, may not have come to your knowledge.

“ There was a period when he had reason to apprehend—and indeed, till lately, who had not ?—you might at his

father's decease be less favourably remembered. Poor at that time himself, at least, comparatively so; extremely young, and totally dependent, he had no means of securing you any immediate provision: but his generous heart furnishing him with expedients for the future, although powerless at the moment, he formed the noble design of binding himself, by the most irrevocable engagement to ensure to you, on his coming into possession of his fortune, a fixed and certain competency. A promise to this effect I accordingly drew up for him, put into his hands to sign, and afterwards, at his own request, subscribed myself.

“ Upon the legality of such a deed, considered as the act of a minor, there was not, I acknowledge, much stress to be laid: upon the scrupulous conscientiousness, however, with which he meant to ratify it, the firmest dependence, I am persuaded, was to be placed; and therefore complying with the earnest solicitations of the youthful projector, I sent it to Sir James Delmington, enclosed in a letter which stated his motives for consigning it to his care, and the apprehensions that had urged him to draw it up.

“ What

“ What became of this paper I know not, or whether it was ever mentioned to you as being thought worthy of attention. At all events, it seemed incumbent upon me to revive the memory of a circumstance which does so much honour to the heart of Somerset—and which, without wounding your feelings, must so deservedly excite your gratitude and sensibility.

“ Farewel, my amiable young ward. I am impatient to return to you, yet, at present, totally unable to decide when that will be. Should you, therefore, have any motive for wishing to write to me before the end of the ensuing week, direct to me here, and be assured of the punctuality and readiness with which I shall at all times be anxious to execute your commands.

“ I remain,

“ My dear Miss Delmington,

“ With the most affectionate regard,

“ Your obedient,

“ And devoted humble servant,

“ F. LENHAM.”

Clarentine had rapidly perused this letter three several times before she could persuade herself that what she read was real. Thus suddenly, thus unexpectedly to find herself in the absolute possession of a fortune which to her moderate and rational mind appeared so ample, seemed too like enchantment to be believed!—How was she ever to spend it? How create to herself new wants sufficient to render it of any use? The point was not easy to decide, since absurd as it would hitherto have appeared to her, for one instant, to have indulged the improbable idea of ever becoming the uncontrouled mistress of such an income, she had not one favourite plan to advert to, or one long cherished scheme, however visionary it might before have seemed, which now she wished to realize.

“ This then being the case,” cried she, smiling at the perplexed, and even visible deliberation in which she had been engaged, “ I must disclaim all title to the admiration which is the usual reward of *generosity*, and learn to be content with the more humble commendation that follows *justice*. In disposing of my superabundance

abundance towards the relief of those less bounteously provided for, I make no sacrifice, can boast no merit, and renounce no gratification. In reality I want nothing, at least, nothing which in my present circumstances a third part of the annual stipend I am to receive will not abundantly supply. Beyond that, all which I might dissipate would be unnecessary. and almost criminal. I have no fashionable connexions; no expensive pursuits; no extravagant habits: in what then, without torturing my brain to invent new modes of prodigality, in what *could* I (who have so long been inured to frugality and retirement) spend an income, which to me appears so boundless and inexhaustible?"

The result of these philosophical, but untutored reflections was, that, without communicating her purpose to any one, except Mr. Lenham, whom she thought it her duty upon all occasions to consult, she determined immediately to take upon herself the discharge of the full sum Lady Delmington now paid for her board and lodging; and then, dividing the residue of her whole year's allowance into two

equal portions, to appropriate the one, at least during her present exigencies, to the use of Madame d'Arzele; and to retain the other, still more than sufficient to gratify every wish she could form, for her own expenditure.

Having decided upon a plan, which thus effectually relieved her from the troublesome *embarras des richesses* in which she had so sincerely dreaded to be involved, Clarentine, with a mind lightened of all its new cares, and a countenance more than usually animated and glowing, descended rather before the accustomed hour at which the family was wont to assemble to tea, and joined Mrs. Barclay and her daughter in the garden.

The vivacity that sparkled in her eyes, and the unrestrained gaiety with which she accosted them, excited Miss Barclay's immediate attention; and after staring in her face some time with great curiosity, she bluntly exclaimed—

“Why, in the name of wonder, what's come to you this evening? I never saw you look so lively and merry before. Have you had any good news?”

“Yes,”

“ Yes,” replied Clarentine smiling—
“ I have had very good news.”

“ I am glad to hear it,” cried Mrs Barclay, “ I hope you will tell us what it is.”

To this, Clarentine, not foreseeing the strange construction that might be put upon the uncommon cheerfulness she had betrayed, and naturally too open and undisguised to have any predilection for unnecessary mysteries and concealments, readily consented, and in as few words as possible, frankly recapitulated the contents of Mr. Lenham’s letter. When she had concluded—

“ Upon my word,” cried Miss Barclay drily—“ I don’t so much wonder at your sprightliness now! You have good substantial reasons for it; and yet, I don’t know how it is, but I should have been tempted to imagine a young lady like you, whose refinement and disinterestedness has been so much cried up, would have shewn less rapture upon such a *worldly occasion*! I am glad, however, to find there’s not that difference between us I thought there was; for to speak the truth, this is exactly the way I should have received such intelligence myself.”

“ Ay,

“ Ay, to be sure ;” cried her mother, intending to espouse Clarentine’s cause, “ you don’t suppose Miss Clary has not spirit enough to be pleased as much as other people at such a lucky *God-send* ! For my part, I give her joy on’t with all my soul ; and heartily wish she could do the same by me !”

A cordial burst of self-applause followed this witty speech ; after which, Clarentine not chusing to enter upon her own vindication, very little more was said that related to the subject, and they all walked in to tea.

C H A P. VII.

CLARENTINE, assured of being less unfavourably interpreted by her friends at Delmington than she had been by Mrs. and Miss Barclay, wrote the next morning a detail of the unexpected communication she had received from Mr. Lenham, and enclosed an extract from his

own letter, as a confirmation that seemed indispenfibly requifite of the wonderful, and fcarce credible tale, fhe afferted.

To this letter, a very few days brought her an answer, abounding in congratulations the moft affectionate and cordial, not only from every individual of the family, but from Lady Julia, and her excellent father alfo. As for the warm-hearted Sophia, fhe feemed quite wild with joy—“only,” as fhe confefled herfelf—“the idea of Clarentine’s being doomed to live with fuch people as the Barclays difturbed her beyond meafure.”

“I cannot bear your odious Mifs Lucy,” fhe added—“and can hardly perfuade myfelf even to think with Chriftian charity of her mama. You fpeak very cautiously about them—yet I can plainly perceive they are the moft contracted, narrow-minded, vulgar animals that ever were created! How is it poffible fuch a polifhed, amiable man as Mr. Lenham, can endure fuch creatures in his houfe?—Quit them, for fhame! and come and live with your charming Madame d’Arzele again. Indeed, indeed thefe

1

people

people are not fit society for my Clarentine.

“ As for Mr. Eltham, who you tell me has already introduced himself at your house, I suspect he will have some very entertaining dialogues with Miss Lucy! She promises fair to become an admirable butt for him. Pray send me a minute account of his behaviour to her; do all you can to persuade her to fall in love with him; and then, if you desire effectually to get rid of him, betray her to mama, and council the good lady to prohibit his visits! You will laugh at this advice perhaps, but I can assure you, I should follow it myself very exactly, in the same circumstances.

“ But *apropos*—I scarcely know *de quoi* though, but that is no matter; let me inform you of that dear, delightful Lord Welwyn’s enchanting plan for his daughter next spring. He means to take her to town for three months, in order to have her presented, and likewise in order to inure her a little to the bustle and confusion of the great world, previous to *her marriage*. During the first month or six weeks of their residence in London, Har-

riet, *en droit d'ainesse*, is invited to be with them; after which, *my* turn is to arrive, and I am to join their party till their return to this place in May. Lady Julia's pretty mouth dimples at this prospect, when talking of it with me: but at other times, if she sits and thinks of it alone, her timid heart sinks with terror at the idea of a scene so new, an introduction so formidable, and a manner of living so busy and so perturbed. Not so your enraptured Sophia. Having no presentations to fear (thanks to my obscurity, and thanks also to the *rural* style of life I seem destined to lead) all I look forward to is amusement, and all I anticipate is pleasure. *Here*, these are things I never panted to obtain, because I very well knew they were not to *be* obtained; but, *there*, as both are accessible, I am fully determined both shall be enjoyed! And so, farewell my beloved Clarentine, farewell till next April."

Thus concluded this gay and characteristic letter. It put Clarentine into spirits for the day, and inspired her with so much joy on account of the happy prospect it held out for the spring, that her
delight

delight upon the occasion was scarcely inferior to that of Sophia herself.

After an absence of near three weeks, Mr. Lenham at length returned. Clarentine welcomed him on his arrival with the truest satisfaction; and impatient to make known to him, and to obtain his sanction of her projected designs, seized the first opportunity, when they were by themselves, of speaking to him upon the subject.

To her intended donation annually to Madame d'Arzele, the nearness and dearness of that lady's relationship to her, and the distressed state of her actual circumstances, forbade his making any opposition; on the contrary, he applauded her purpose with warmth, and assured her he entertained not the least doubt of its meeting with the readiest concurrence from Captain Somerset.

With regard, however, to her payment of himself, during her residence at his house, he declined saying any thing, leaving her to settle the matter in whatever way she chose with Lady Delmington herself.

Thus

Thus authoris'd, Clarentine lost no time in farther consideration, but arming herself with courage for the arduous undertaking, immediately retired to her own room for the purpose of writing to Madame d'Arzele.

Her letter, though short, was at once persuasive, earnest, and affectionate: every motive she could urge in favour of her proposal was strongly dwelt upon, and forcibly pointed out. Eloquent, yet timid; animated, yet respectful, by turns she reasoned, and she sued, till argument itself was exhausted, and supplication could reach no further.

Enclosed in this letter, was a bill for 25*l.* deducted from the first quarterly payment she had received from Mr. Lenham; an equal sum remained for her own use; and the rest, she determined to lay apart towards the discharge of the yearly pension Lady Delmington had agreed to pay for her.

Her next business was, to inform that lady herself of her decision. This, though by no means so difficult a task as the former, was one, however, that still required the utmost delicacy and circumspection.

Proudly,

Proudly, or ungraciously, after all the obligations she had received, to have rejected any further services the instant her dependence was at an end, would have evinced a degree of selfishness and ingratitude, of which Clarentine could not bear to be thought capable. Her letter, therefore, though plain and candid, was more humble and more diffident than any she had ever written before.

By return of post she received the two answers she so ardently desired.

The first she opened, that of Madame d'Arzele, affected her so deeply before she had proceeded half through it, that she had scarce power to read to its conclusion. The impassioned gratitude and sensibility it expressed; the kind and flattering acceptance it contained; and above all, the tender acknowledgments with which it abounded on behalf of the helpless babes, to whom such a grant afforded certain maintenance and support, delighted at once, and distressed the feeling Clarentine almost to an equal degree! More than ever, however, did she congratulate herself upon the dispensation she had made,
and

and more than ever prize the power she had acquired.

Lady Delmington wrote with less enthusiasm, it will be believed, but scarcely with less affection. She agreed to her niece's proposal as to a thing it would be indelicate to oppose; yet at the same time rallied her with a considerable degree of archness upon the promptitude with which she had thought it necessary to announce her determination, and good-humouredly cautioned her against adding one more, to the too-ample list that already existed of *proud Delmingtons*.

Clarentine, though she could scarcely help laughing, was yet sorry to have appeared, even in jest, to require such a warning. She flattered herself, however, that when she wrote again she should be able to prove how little it was necessary; and meanwhile, discarding from her mind all reflections that could excite uneasiness, gave herself up without reserve to the pleasure that resulted from the consciousness of having benefited those she loved, and performed her own part with rectitude.

C H A P. VIII.

SIX weeks had now nearly elapsed since Clarentine's arrival at Hampstead, and except Eltham, who, in that time had repeatedly called, and Mrs. Denbigh, who, since the return of Mr. Lenham, often drank tea at the house, she had scarcely seen one individual who did not immediately belong to the family, or ventured beyond the limits of the garden, or the small field that adjoined to it.

One evening, however, being left, at the end of that period, *tête-a-tête* with Miss Barclay, whose mother was gone to London upon business with Mr. Lenham, she consented at that young lady's pressing solicitation to accompany her on a more distant ramble.

The evening was so fine, and, when it contained no company, Miss Barclay's aversion to the house was so great, that night was coming on rapidly before Clarentine could persuade her to turn back; and consequently when they arrived at their own door it was already completely dark.

Rejoiced,

Rejoiced, however, to have reached home at all, Clarentine, after she entered, said not to reproach her adventurous companion for her imprudence; but quitting her at the bottom of the stairs, turned horth into the parlour to look whether any letters had been brought for her during her absence.

As she opened the door, and was hastily advancing without any other light than that which a glimmering fire afforded, the tall figure of a man standing up immediately opposite to her with his back to the chimney, startled her so much, that she was half tempted to run out again. Hearing one of the maids, however, in the passage, she called to her, and with as little appearance of alarm as she could, said, in a low voice—

“Is this gentleman waiting for your master?”

“Yes Miss—he came in just before you.”

Somewhat re-affured on finding he had gained *legal admission*, she then ordered candles, intending the moment they were brought to quit the room, and rejoin Miss Barclay.

Meanwhile,

Meanwhile, the stranger, (who in height and figure bore so peculiar a resemblance to Eltham, that she was sometimes half tempted to think it was Eltham in person) had resigned his station at the fire, and very politely placed a chair for her near it, concluding she meant as well as himself to wait there till Mr. Lenham returned.

Clarentine, too much embarrassed by the awkwardness of her situation to attempt speaking, only bowed her thanks, without venturing to move from the door, which she held half open in her hand, ready to make her escape the moment the maid re-appeared.

A silence so determined, and still more, the cautious distance at which she stood, seemed to excite the stranger's curiosity, for, before the candles could arrive, growing impatient to see her face, he once again approached the fire, and gave it so effectual a stir, that the bright flame into which it burst out enabled him instantly to take a perfect view of her whole countenance, at the same time that it likewise afforded her an opportunity of examining him.

The

The total silence that had preceded this mutual survey was now but of short duration. Clarentine, agitated, and almost breathless, broke it first; and irresolutely advancing, said in an eager and tremulous accent, whilst her eyes were intently rivetted on his face—

“Do I deceive myself? Can this be real? Are you *indeed* Capt. Somerset?”

Somerset (for it was he himself) allowed her time to say no more. Struck by the earnest tone of her voice, and the touching sensibility that was evident in her countenance, his warm and affectionate heart sprung forth to meet her, and told him, at once, she could be no other than the dear, the pitied, and ever lovely orphan, whom he had parted from almost a child, and now beheld in stature and in form, a finished, graceful woman.

“My Clarentine!” cried he, flying towards her, and taking her hand, “my dearest Clarentine! How little was I prepared for the pleasure of meeting you here! Do you live with Mr. Lenham? Have you been long in town? Tell me, tell me every thing that relates to yourself, and every thing which you may rea-

sonably suppose, a wanderer such as I have been, must wish to know, and feel interested in hearing !”

“ I will,” cried Clarentine, smiling at his eagerness, “ I will most readily : but at least sit down to hear my tale ; for since you ask so much at once, you cannot expect me to be very brief.”

The entrance of the maid prevented her saying any more, and checked for a time the enquiries which Somerset was so anxious to pour forth. His eyes, however, during that interval, spoke most expressively, and as he again delightedly regarded her with looks of admiration and surprise, plainly indicated all the pleasure he felt, and all the friendship he retained.

When once more they were left by themselves, hesitating a moment, and half-smiling, he said, “ The longer I see you, the less I know how to renounce my ancient privileges ; and yet, I ought not now to address you thus familiarly, to call you, as in former times, *my Clarentine*, and to treat you with this uncourtly plainness. Can you, in consideration of what I am, a blunt, unpolished sailor, can you
pardon

pardon so glaring a solecism in good manners?"

"Would I could as easily pardon," replied Clarentine, a little reproachfully, "your long silence, and your breach of promise!"

Somerfet's gaiety vanished in a moment—

"Is this," cried he, earnestly, "a just reproach? No, believe me—frequently and constantly did I write, not only during my late West-India station, but also while yet cruising in the Mediterranean; to some of the earliest of these letters I even received answers, but to all those of later date you have invariably remained silent."

Clarentine at the conclusion of this speech looked a little conscious, and appeared at a loss what defence to make for herself. The fact was, that not having received, since he quitted the Mediterranean, any one of the letters he had written, she had grown weary of keeping up so languid a correspondence, and had wholly discontinued writing herself. This, after some hesitation, she honestly confessed; and peace being then restored,

Somerfet earnestly besought her to gratify the anxious curiosity he had to know what cause had determined her to quit her former residence.

Though infinitely averse to entering fully upon this subject, and fearful of drawing upon herself the imputation of vanity and conceit, Clarentine so far conquered her reluctance, however, as to speak of it, after the first moment, with all that candour and openness which Somerfet's long friendship for her, his near relationship, and the interest he took in her affairs, entitled him, she thought, to expect. Throwing off all disguise, therefore, she frankly acknowledged that to Sir Edgar's imprudent attachment was alone to be attributed her late removal, and her present situation.

This confession naturally led to the mention of Lady Julia, whose engagement she spoke of with the same sincerity, as well as of the obligation she had thought herself under, on account of the confidence and kindness with which her Ladyship had always honoured her, to repress any hopes Sir Edgar might have conceived with regard to herself.

“ Of

“ Of perfidy towards a friend for whom I entertained so much affection, and who in herself was so amiable, I may venture to affirm,” continued Clarentine, “ I should have been utterly incapable, even had my love for Sir Edgar been of a nature less sisterly than it was. Not for one moment, therefore, did I harbour the detestable idea—form the slightest wish of supplanting her ; neither should I have been weak enough, if I *had*, to imagine such an attempt could ever have been sanctioned by his mother. Destined consequently, if I remained in the same house, to become an object of continual suspicion—to shun Sir Edgar assiduously—to dissemble with Lady Julia, and in return perhaps to excite only distrust, I now began to think, however I might lament it at first, that the temporary banishment to which I have been consigned, was the happiest thing that could have befallen me. Sir Edgar also, I am now persuaded, thinks so himself. He has implicitly submitted to the wishes of his family, and ratified every promise that had been made for him.”

“ Ten thousand thanks, my charming friend,” cried Somerset, when she paused, “ ten thousand thanks for this ingenuous recital. The noble sincerity that so early distinguished you—that so early excited the esteem and confidence of all who knew you, time, I perceive, has had no power to diminish. You are still the same open, unreserved, and generous Clarentine I ever found you !”

“ I suspect by the warmth of this eulogium,” replied Clarentine, smiling, “ you impute greater merit to me upon the present occasion than I really deserve. Had my *heart* been as much a sufferer in this business as my *pride*, my frankness to you might indeed have claimed some admiration ; but that not being the case, I had nothing more to overcome than a momentary sensation of embarrassment, the natural consequence of being the heroine ; and what is worse, *the heroine in disgrace*—of my own tale. Let us now, however,” added she, “ talk of something else. How long have you been in England ?”

“ A very short time,” answered Somerset.

He

He then proceeded to inform her of the dreadful shock he had received, on his arrival in Northamptonshire, whither he hastened the instant he landed, in total ignorance of the melancholy event that had recently taken place. Unprepared as he was for such intelligence—dispirited and completely overpowered by it, he had for some days no courage to think of writing, or even to attempt moving from the gloomy and uninhabited mansion to which, with such far different hopes, he had so eagerly repaired.

Becoming impatient, however, to learn some tidings of his friends in London, but more particularly of the revered and venerable Mr. Lenham, he had made an effort at length to shake off the listlessness and depression that had hitherto retained him in inactivity, and determined to set out and make those enquiries in person. In London he had seen only the old domestic who still resided in his father's house; and from him obtaining no satisfactory information, had proceeded forward almost without stopping till he reached Hampstead.

This little narrative was scarcely concluded, before Mr. Lenham returned.

Clarentine witnessed the first meeting of that excellent man and his youthful friend, with the most sympathizing emotions of delight and joy. They remained, however, but a short time below, as the presence of Mrs. and Miss Barclay, who soon after entered the room, seemed to repress the mutual overflowings of their hearts, and utterly to prevent their engaging in any confidential discourse.

When therefore they had retired to Mr. Lenham's study, and Clarentine was left with the two ladies, Miss Barclay, with an eagerness it was by no means easy to account for, asked how long Somerset had been arrived? where he intended to reside? what stay it was probable he would make in England? and so many other questions of the same nature, that Clarentine, unprepared for such an examination, at length attempted to check it, by saying—

“ I am not yet acquainted with half these particulars, my dear Miss Barclay, and therefore cannot possibly reply to them, but tell me, whence this extreme solicitude

solicitude concerning Captain Somerset? Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes, very often—and yet, it is not for myself I ask all this. I was desired by—"

She stopped, and colouring violently, presently added—"In short, I have reasons for wishing to know as much as I can about him. If you don't chuse, however, to give me any information, I shall endeavour to find out those that will."

"Why, what is all this fuss and secrecy about?" enquired her mother, a little angrily—"I should be glad to know, Lucy, what Capt. Somerset can be to you!"

"Lord, mama!" exclaimed Miss Lucy peevishly, "how should you understand any thing about the matter?—I suppose I may ask a common question or two without being called to account for it like a child!"

And so saying, she indignantly flung out of the room, throwing the door after her with such violence, that she made every window in the house rattle in its frame.

“ Lord help us, what a girl it is !” cried her mother, as soon as she was gone—
“ there’s no speaking a word to her without putting her in a pet ! I dare say, however, I have guessed pretty nearly what it is, Miss Clary, that makes her so curious about your cousin. She’s a fool for her pains, and had much better be minding her own affairs, than trying to play other people’s cards for them.”

Clarentine was totally unable to comprehend this hint, and but little inclined to seek its explanation. She therefore suffered it to pass without any comment, and Mrs. Barclay, the next minute, began talking of other things.

At supper the two gentlemen made their appearance again, and Miss Barclay hearing them go down, smoothed her frowning brow, and tripped lightly after them. She seated herself opposite Somerset, and devoted her whole attention to him ; frequently fixing her large dark eyes upon his face with an earnestness and perseverance, that no less astonished Clarentine, than it evidently offended Mr. Lenham. As for Somerset himself, it was some time before he observed her : but when he did,
regarding

regarding her in return with nearly equal curiosity, he suddenly addressed her as a person he had that moment recollected, and said—

“ I think I have had the honour of seeing you somewhere else, Madam. Were you not with Miss Compton at Mrs. Castleton’s near Portsmouth, just before my last embarkation but one ?”

Miss Barclay answered in the affirmative, adding, “ Miss Compton is Mrs. Hertford now. She married soon after you failed.”

“ I hope,” resumed Somerset, “ she is well.”

“ I have not seen her very lately,”—replied Miss Barclay—“ But as I understand she is now in town for a short time, I hope to have that pleasure to-morrow.”

Somerset’s enquiries, after this, proceeded no further: but Miss Barclay evidently wishing to dwell upon the subject, entered into a minute detail of every thing that had befallen her friend since her marriage; and concluded by lamenting, in very strong terms, the unfortunate dependence, and pecuniary embarrass-

ments to which so lovely and accomplished a woman found herself reduced.

Somerfet appeared to concur in this opinion very sincerely. He immediately wrote down Mrs. Hertford's direction, and declared his intention of calling upon her the next morning.

This little dialogue, though it seemed not to strike any one else, surprized Clarentine extremely. In Mrs. Hertford she appeared fated to discover, accidentally and by degrees, a woman, who though nearly a stranger to herself, was intimately known to every acquaintance or friend she had, and by each of them individually seemed to be held in a different degree of estimation. Eltham, she had found, thought of her with contempt, and spoke of her with derision; Miss Barclay never mentioned her but with the most unbounded praise and admiration; Mr. Lenham appeared not to doubt the respectability of her character, but, at the same time, to know too little of her to regard her with any thing but indifference; Mrs. Barclay had already betrayed that she considered her as a coquette; and lastly, Somerfet, uninfluenced by the partiality

tiality of the one, or the prejudices of the other, openly professed to feel for her the utmost compassion, and to look upon her with the truest esteem. How were all these various opinions to be reconciled? Clarentine was lost in doubt and perplexity. Less inclined, however, to distrust the favourable sentiments of Somerset, than to suspect the judgment of Eltham, she once again, more strongly than ever, was confirmed in the belief that he had injured Mrs. Hertford, and causelessly led her to imbibe an erroneous idea of her.

Well acquainted with the early hours Mr. Lenham was accustomed to keep, his considerate guest took leave soon after they rose from table, promising to repeat his visit some time in the course of the following day.

Accordingly, the next evening, just as Clarentine, who, though she knew not why, had been called down to tea sooner than usual, was preparing to obey the summons, she saw him, from her closet window, open the gate before the house, and walk up to the door. They met at the foot of the stairs, Somerset on hear-
ing

ing her call to him having waited there till she ran down; and after a short conversation entered the parlour together.— In addition to the usual family party, they found, seated next Mr. Lenham at the tea table, his friend Mrs. Denbigh. Captain Somerset knew that lady well, and immediately hastened forward to pay his respects to her; whilst Clarentine, incapable of attending to any thing else, stood for some minutes petrified with amazement, considering the altered dress and strange decorations of Mrs. and Miss Barclay, who both, it was evident, were thus attired for foreign conquest, and perhaps also for domestic admiration.

As soon as tea was over, and the two ladies did every thing in their power to hurry it as much as possible, Miss Barclay started up, and casting her eyes towards the antique clock, which, from the chimney-piece on which it stood, had with undeviating regularity monotonously chimed each revolving hour for more than thirty years, eagerly called out to her mother—

“Lord, mama, we shall be monstrous late; pray get your cloak and let's be off.”

Young

Young Blandford upon this addressed himself to Mrs. Barclay, and said—

“ Shall I be allowed to go with you, ma’am ?”

“ I don’t know, indeed, child ; you hav’n’t got leave, have you ?”

“ O yes,” said Mr. Lenham smiling, “ if you chuse to be troubled with him, he has my full permission.”

“ Well then, good-by to you all,” cried Mrs Barclay. “ Good-by. Come along, Lucy, come.”

“ O, but stop, mama,” said Miss Lucy, “ stop a minute ; I forgot it till now : but Mr. Eltham,” added she, “ overtook me in Pall-Mall, just as I was stepping up to Mrs. Hertford’s door, and gave me a thousand messages to deliver to her ; they are half gone out of my head, but I remember, however, they were all excessive civil, and (audibly whispering, with affected mysteriousness) excessive *tender* ! There, now, I have executed my commission—I’m ready.—Come Blandford.”

Then followed by her mother, in as high spirits as herself, away tripped this exact and punctilious lady.

Somerſet,

Somerfet, extremely amused by their eagerness, now asked whither in such haste they were gone?

Mrs. Denbigh, with a shrug and an emphatical groan, answered—

“ To Breslaw s, the *Conjuror* !”

Clarentine stared ; Somerfet laughed ; and Mr. Lenham mildly said—

“ Nay, my dear madam, why should we despise these good people for seeking to divert themselves their own way ? If their minds are incapacitated for higher enjoyments, in God’s name, let them go ‘ to the *Conjurors*.’”

“ Why truly,” resumed Mrs. Denbigh, leisurely tapping the lid of her snuff-box, “ if by some lucky flight of hand the cunning man could succeed in twirling their brains round to the proper place, I should think their time could not be better spent : but with all his ingenuity, I never heard friend Breslaw possessed the requisite abilities for such a task.”

“ Who knows,” thought Somerfet, what friend Breslaw might achieve if the brains were there to twirl !”

Then addressing Clarentine—

“ How comes it,” said he, smiling, “ *you* were not of this party ?”

“ I never

“ I never heard it had been planned,” answered she, “ till it would have been too late to have proposed joining it.”

“ O, Miss Delmington, I understand,” said Mrs. Denbigh, “ is deemed utterly unworthy of being made a partaker of these refined amusements ! Mrs. Barclay was not even permitted to mention her intention before her.”

At that moment a loud ring at the gate-bell was heard ; and whilst Mr. Lenham was endeavouring to conjecture who this unexpected visitor might be, the maid entered, and, particularly addressing the intelligence to Clarentine, announced Mr. Eltham.

Somerfet, instantly recollecting the parting speech Miss Barclay had uttered, turned his eyes towards Clarentine with an arch smile, and was beginning to rally her upon this visit, when observing her change colour, and look extremely disconcerted, he checked himself in some consternation, and directed all his attention towards the door, at which Eltham, the next minute, made his appearance.

Bowing first to Clarentine, as to the person whom his visit was principally de-

signed for, and then in a more general way to the rest of the party, he drew a chair near her's, and was upon the point of seating himself, when Mr. Lenham, who had at first forgot that ceremony, but now recollected that as they might often meet it would be necessary, begged leave to introduce him and Capt. Somerset to each other.

Eltham, starting at the name, and looking towards Somerset, who at the same moment bowed to him, with the most eager curiosity, made a grave inclination to him in return, and taking his place in total silence, assumed an air of extreme reserve, and spoke not for a considerable time, unless called upon by some direct enquiry.

The first quarter of an hour was devoted, as is invariably the case among people who know but little of each others' habits and connexions, to animadverting upon the heat or cold of the weather; the fulness or emptiness of the town; the dustiness of the roads, and other such enlivening topics! By degrees, however, the conversation took a more agreeable turn: Somerset, who at first had been too
much

much offended by the cold haughtiness of Eltham's manners to bear any part in it, animated by the example of Mr. Lenham and Mrs. Denbigh, made an effort to conquer his ill-humour; and Eltham reviving likewise, and every where equally at his ease, and equally unembarrassed, soon engaged them all three, either in earnest support, or opposition, of the wild opinions he advanced; and, at least, if he could not *convince, entertained*; if he could not *overpower, perplexed* them.

Clarentine during this conversation sat at work, and wholly silent; but by no means inattentive. She was amused by the fire and excentricity of Eltham; charmed by the candour and patience of Mr. Lenham; surprized at the information and knowledge of Mrs. Denbigh; and interested by the modesty, the good sense, and unassuming gentleness of Somerset. In him, though she observed not the same boldness in maintaining extravagant systems, or the same readiness to *assert*, and eagerness to *defend* preposterous chimeras that she discovered in Eltham, she perceived a clearness of judgment, and a consistency of principle, that weighed

weighed far more with her than all the false glare of his antagonist, the brilliancy of his wit, or the ingenuity of his arguments.

This spirited, but amicable contention, lasted till the return of Mrs. and Miss Barclay, and their young companion. Eltham would then have taken his leave, but Mr. Lenham, naturally hospitable and polite, pressed him to stay supper; and to this, without much importunity, he consented.

Meanwhile young Blandford, having seated himself next Clarentine, was giving her, at her own request, a circumstantial detail of all the wonders to which he had been a witness. The subject soon drew the attention of Mrs. Barclay herself, who as much a child to the full as the juvenile narrator, hung over the back of his chair, assisted him in the recital whenever his memory failed, and appeared to enjoy nearly as much delight in *repeating* what she had seen, as she could have done had the whole been acted again before her.

Their eagerness and volubility at length excited the curiosity of Somers and Eltham,

tham, who now became auditors in their turn, affected to listen with the utmost astonishment to the many surprising feats of dexterity that were recounted; and so enchanted the two relators by their earnest attention, that had not a timely summons to the supper-table interrupted the flow of their eloquence, Clarentine must have despaired of release till the whole party broke up for the night.

The conversation during their meal, though it was more diffuse and unconnected than it had been in the early part of the evening, was supported with good sense by *some*, with good-humour by *all* present; and when the hour of separation drew near, every body appeared to think of it with reluctance.

At the moment of taking leave, Eltham perceiving that Clarentine stood at some distance from the rest of the company, took advantage of the general confusion, to approach, and address her in a low voice—

“ I begin to like your Somerset,” said he, “ better than I expected. He is *rational* without being *dull*; and the first in whom I ever found united the plain frankness

ness of a sailor, with the good-breeding and the polish of a man of fashion!"

"I am glad to find you so well disposed to do him justice," said Clarentine.

"Ah, but remember," resumed Eltham with quickness, "remember upon what *terms* I do him this justice; no longer than whilst he inviolably adheres to his present character of *guardian*, and of *friend*!"

"Then long, I believe," said Clarentine, smiling, "long indeed may he flatter himself he shall retain your favour!"

"Are you sincere?" cried Eltham, steadfastly regarding her, "are you really sincere in this opinion? You blush!" continued he, after a short silence. "Oh Clarentine! you spoke not as your wishes, or your heart directed!"

Clarentine affecting to laugh, yet cruelly confused, turned away without answering him, and walked up to Mr. Lenham; whilst Eltham, rooted for some minutes to the spot where she had left him, followed her reproachfully with his eyes; and then, hardly conscious of what he did, put on his hat, and ran abruptly out of the room. Somerset soon after followed him, and Clarentine the next moment retired.

CHAP.

C H A P. IX.

SOMERSET, unwilling to remove to any distance from Hampstead, had now established himself at his house in Clifford street, for the winter, and scarcely suffered a day to pass in the course of which he did not, either morning or evening, visit his young ward. Attentive to the minutest circumstance that could conduce to her domestic comfort and convenience, and well knowing that her *own* would be the last wants she would allow herself to supply, he took the utmost delight in ornamenting and fitting up for her the favourite closet he had heard her so partially commemorate. Books, Drawings, an excellent harp, purchased in consequence of having accidentally learnt from Eltham that she used to perform upon that instrument; in short, whatever fancy could devise, or wealth procure to make this little retreat worthy of the lovely possessor, was profusely lavished upon it; and by Clarentine, sensible of the generous pleasure he took in thus seeking

seeking to promote her satisfaction, gratefully, yet sometimes half reproachfully, accepted.

If she walked out, he accompanied her; whilst she sat working or drawing, he read to her; whatever she expressed the slightest wish to learn, he sought the best instructors to teach her;—and all this with such unpresuming delicacy, such a constant dread of disgusting her by too great an appearance of officiousness, that his assiduities far from oppressing, or laying her under the smallest restraint, seemed but to wear the form of an affectionate brother's kindness, and never lessened, or for one moment checked that gay and innocent familiarity with which she had always been accustomed to treat him. He was her counsellor, guardian, protector, and friend all in one; she loved him with the most artless tenderness; advised with and confided in him implicitly upon all occasions; received every fresh mark of his attention with mingled pride and pleasure, as an additional proof of his approbation and good opinion; delighted in his society, and never felt so thoroughly elated as when she could flatter herself
with

ith the hope of having, by her cheerfulness, and zealous endeavours to oblige him, contributed, in some measure, to his happiness from whom she derived so large a portion of her *own*.

From a state of felicity thus pure, and thus serene, she was first disturbed by the importunate attentions of Eltham, and he yet more, to her, irksome and depressing visits of Mrs. Hertford. This redundancy of late renewing more closely than ever her former intimacy with Miss Barclay, and renewing likewise all her former inexplicable civility to Clarentine, had established herself, for the remainder of the autumn, in lodgings within a few doors of Mr. Lenham's, and might almost be said to spend her whole time at his house. She was accomplished, animated, and attractive; by the major part of the family, therefore, her society was considered as almost valuable acquisition; and by every guest who met her there, she was flattered and admired. Yet Clarentine, who, mild and placid as she was, supported with patient forbearance the pert familiarity of Miss Barclay, or the abrupt vulgarity of

her mother; Clarentine, of whom it might so justly have hitherto been said, that—

“ Her smiles were sober, and her looks

“ Were cheerful unto all,”*

in defiance of her wonted candour and sweetness, knew not how to indure this universal favourite. Vain had been every internal argument she had hitherto held in her behalf; vain all her attempts to banish from her memory the first disadvantageous impression she had received of her! The more she saw her, the more reserved and distant she found herself involuntarily becoming; and to so painful a degree did these sensations of dislike at length arise, that as often as she could, when Mrs. Hertford called, she formed some excuse for quitting the room, and retreating to her own till she was gone.

Somerſet, unſuſpicious of the motive that gave birth to this ſingularity of conduct, gazed after her on theſe occaſions with looks of equal mortification and concern. Often, though without ſucceſs, did he attempt as ſhe approached the door to lead her back, or at leaſt, to exact from her a promiſe that ſhe would ſoon return.

* Reliques of Ancient Poetry.

However

However gentle her refusals, they were always steady and firm; she could give no reason for her inflexibility, but if urged too long, her eyes involuntarily filled with tears, she looked distressed and embarrassed; and the generous Somerset, too considerate to press her further, in silent wonder suffered her to depart.

From her earliest infancy, Clarentine recollected to have heard it said, and by one whom she respected and believed, the honoured Lady Delmington, that the most certain cure for the dejection of a mind ill at ease, was activity and employment. Clarentine's mind, and she too well suspected the cause, *was* ill at ease, more so than she ever remembered to have known it before. To employment, therefore, the most diligent and incessant, she had eager recourse; and though her own wishes would have prompted her to indulge in idleness, and even indolence, to her own wishes she permitted not herself to attend; but spurred on by the hope of driving from her mind the sadness that oppressed it, every hour was devoted to the pursuit of some useful occupation, or

to the accomplishment of some benevolent design. In company with Mrs. Denbigh, who upon a longer acquaintance she found as much reason to esteem as to admire, she visited and relieved many of the sick poor in the neighbourhood; recommended their children to the notice and protection of Mr. Lenham; found work for some of the young women who were willing to be employed; and dispensed with so liberal a hand around her every blessing which kindness, sympathy, and timely, though not profuse donations, can confer, that however anxious and disquieted she might at intervals still feel, all real sorrow was nearly forgotten, and in contemplating the few, but grateful happy she had made, she was sometimes more than half inclined to include *herself* in the number.

C H A P. X.

HITHERTO Clarentine, though she had now been at Mr. Lenham's near four months, had rarely been in London, and, except to Mrs. Denbigh, had never paid any visits whatever. She knew not a single individual in town; and Somerset had always so earnestly cautioned her not to accompany the Barclays to any of the inferior public-places to which they were perpetually resorting, that she had resolutely declined ever being of their parties.

One morning, however, towards the latter end of November, hearing that the two ladies were going to town upon what they called *shopping business*, and meant positively to return to dinner; wishing to seize that opportunity of making some purchases for herself, she proposed, if it was not inconvenient, going with them.

Somerset, who was present when this plan was agreed upon, very strenuously sought to obtain permission to attend her;

but this, Clarentine as strenuously opposed. Her prepossession against Mrs. Hertford had for some time past began to give way to a slight degree of resentment against Somerset himself. She feared to whisper it even to her own heart, and yet she could not but feel, that the attention he paid that lady; the pleasure he appeared to take in her conversation; and the flattering admiration he avowed for her, had excited in her breast at some moments an emotion so nearly bordering upon envy, and so closely allied to jealousy and anger, that there could be but one passion, to which such sensations were to be attributed—and that passion: was love! Long had she most clearly discerned what were the designs of Mrs. Hertford herself; and long had she beheld with astonishment her artful and persevering endeavours to captivate and attach him. Floating between hope and fear; conscious that her own heart was gone, and doubtful what would be the result of her rival's schemes, it had, however, been but of late that she had seriously apprehended they would be successful; every hour now confirmed her
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in this opinion—increased the evident triumph of Mrs. Hertford, who seemed perfectly to have penetrated her secret sentiments, and ascertained the defeat of Somerset.

Had the woman, however, whom he had thus selected, afflicting to Clarentine as it must ever have been to know he had selected any, possessed a character more conformable to his own, and appeared to her more deserving and more worthy, she flattered herself, and not unjustly, that he could have submitted to her disappointment with greater fortitude. The first wish of her heart was to see him happy: but happy she was too well persuaded a man like him—whose disposition was all kindness and affection, and whose attachments were all domestic—could never be with a woman who, like Mrs. Hertford, betrayed unconsciously a nature so devoid of sensibility, a heart so selfish, and a mind so devoted to dissipation.

Sometimes, when silently observing them as they walked or conversed together, Clarentine had fancied this idea seemed to strike Somerset likewise. Her

blandishments and her flattery appeared to fatigue him; the coldest gravity often overspread his countenance; and glad of any relief, yet scarce knowing what he did, he had eagerly seized on the most frivolous pretences to escape from her, and with studied procrastination delayed rejoining her again.

On these occasions, had she permitted it, Clarentine perceived he would gladly have taken refuge with her. She avoided him, however, most assiduously; or if it any time accident threw her in his way, when there was no third person present, behaved to him with a reserve and formality, so unlike her former confidential gaiety, that although he formed not the most distant conjecture of its cause, he found himself involuntarily repulsed by her coldness, and obliged to desist from all further importunity.

Upon the present occurrence, this newly-assumed solemnity had shewn itself with more than usual force, and Clarentine's rejection of him, uttered before Mrs. Hertford, had been accompanied by a look of impatience, and a smile of disdain, that confounded no less than it
amazed

amazed him. He gazed at her for some minutes, as if he doubted the evidence of his own senses, and then after a long pause, attempting to take her hand, said—

“ Miss Delmington, I entreat, I conjure you, though you have denied my first request, at least grant me five minutes conversation before you go!”

“ I cannot, indeed,” replied she—
“ Mrs. Barclay, I believe, is ready, and it is time we should set out.”

Then turning to Mrs. Hertford, in whose eyes she beheld a gleam of malicious joy, that made her shudder, she slightly curtsied to her, and leaving them together, hastened away.

The moment she found herself at liberty, her full heart bursting with contending passions, she gave way to an agony of tears, and rushed into the first room that was open, to conceal her sorrow and her weakness. Her face covered, and her aching head resting against a chair, she was vainly endeavouring to stifle the deep, and but too-audible sobs that escaped her, when, in a voice of the tenderest compassion, she heard herself

suddenly addressed by the amazed and benevolent Mr. Lenham—

“ My gentle Clarentine,” cried he, taking her hand—“ whence this excess of grief? Who has been with you? Who is it that has thus cruelly disturbed you?”

Clarentine, looking up, and deeply blushing, replied with a melancholy smile—“ The enemy who has done all this, my dearest Sir, is myself, it is my own folly I lament, and not either the unkindness, or the cruelty of others.” Then rising and gently withdrawing her hand—“ Excuse my giving you any further explanation”—added she—“ and forget, dear Mr. Lenham, if you can, that you ever saw me thus unguardedly expose myself.”

So saying, without daring to wait till he spoke to her again, she left him, and ran up to her own room.

In a short time, the voice of Mrs. Barclay, calling to her from the landing-place, once more compelled her to appear. She hastily put on her cloak, and after bathing her eyes, and standing some minutes at the open window, hoping the air would disperse their redness, she armed herself
with

with courage to meet Somerfet in case he came out to see them depart, and walked quietly down stairs.

No Somerfet, however, appeared. Mrs. Barclay was waiting for her alone at the door, and told her Lucy had changed her mind, and would not go—"So as we have nobody to stay for," added she, "let's be off."

Accordingly they began their walk immediately; Clarentine reviving as they proceeded, and in the consciousness that her secret, tho' unhappily betrayed to Mrs. Hertford, was still utterly unknown to Somerfet, and she hoped also, utterly unsuspected by Mr. Lenham, acquiring fortitude patiently to bear whatever other mortification might await her.

At the first shop Mrs. Barclay stopped at, a few minutes after she had entered it, Clarentine heard her very familiarly accosted by a bold, shewy-looking woman who followed them into it, and who, when the first cordial salutations were over, informed her with high glee, that she was just setting off to dine in the city at a friend's house where, in the evening, there was to be a *grand christening*, and where

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she

she expected to meet *all the world and his wife!*

“ Now,” added she, “ if you were good for any thing, Dame Barclay, you’d go along with me. You are quite smart enough, and they know you very well.”

Mrs. Barclay, always ready for any thing that could be called *a frolic*, seemed so willing to embrace this proposal, could she but devise some means of acquainting Mr. Lenham where she was gone, that Clarentine very soon perceiving what would be her decision, and dreading to be included in this party, now stepped forward, and said—

“ I can deliver to him, madam, any message you please, if this gentleman,” turning to the master of the shop, “ will have the goodness to permit one of his people to call me a coach.”

“ Lord, my dear,” cried Mrs. Barclay, “ what should *you* go home for if I don’t? They’ll know I’m old enough to keep out of mischief, and I dare say will never be such fools as to trouble their heads about me. As we can’t conveniently therefore get any body to carry them word, let’s go

without, and try to get back the sooner for't in the evening."

To this, as far as related to herself, Clarentine most warmly objected: but Mrs. Barclay, half affronted at her resistance, and totally regardless of her arguments, urged her so vehemently to comply, and so nearly betrayed a disposition to quarrel with her if she did not, that timid and fearful, a reluctant assent was finally drawn from her, and a coach immediately sent for to convey them all three to Goodman's Fields.

After a tedious ride through some of the closest streets in London—streets which to Clarentine, who had all her life been used to breathe the pure air of the country, appeared scarcely fit for human habitation, they at length arrived at their place of destination. What, however, was poor Mrs. Barclay's disappointment, when, on being shewn up into the dining-room, the first intelligence she heard from the mistress of the house, who seemed, in consequence, totally unprepared to receive company was, that her child had been taken ill, and the christening was put off!

"Lord,"

“ Lord,” cried Mrs. Watkins, the lady who had led the mortified Mrs. Barclay thither, “ why didn’t you fend me word so?”

“ I did; a note went to your house by ten o’clock this morning.”

“ Ten o’clock! Lord help you, I was dressed and out before that time.”

“ I am extremely sorry it happened so,” resumed the lady, “ but upon my word I could not fend sooner.”

“ Well,” cried Mrs. Watkins, recovering from her first consternation, “ if the worst comes to the worst, you, and this young lady, Dame Barclay, must go home and dine with *me*.”

“ You are very good,” said Clarentine, “ but we may yet get back to Hampstead in perfect time, and that will be infinitely better on all accounts.”

“ Lord bless me, Miss Clary,” exclaimed Mrs. Barclay, affecting to laugh, yet evidently much displeased at her presuming to answer for her, “ you need not be so impatient, for though Mr. Eltham *did* say he’d call to-day, I’ll lay my life he’ll not set out till evening, and therefore

fore you may safely dine in town without fearing to miss him."

"O, there's a sweet-heart in the case, is there?" cried Mrs. Watkins, facetiously, "I don't so much wonder then at the young lady's unwillingness."

Extremely provoked at these speeches, Clarentine now determined to give up all interference, and quietly to let Mrs. Barclay pursue her own course. She accordingly followed the two ladies back into the coach, which fortunately had not yet been dismissed, and in passive silence heard them give orders to be driven to Long Acre.

On their arrival there, Mrs. Watkins ushering them into a dark and comfortless back-parlour, in which were two or three noisy, quarrelling children, left them, to give orders concerning dinner, and to see the cloth laid in the front room.

"Well," cried Mrs. Barclay, as soon as she was gone, "I've been led into a mighty scrape indeed! It doesn't signify, but to be sure she richly deserves all the trouble she'll have. I dare say her cupboard is empty enough! Ten to one if

we get a scrap of any thing these two hours."

Clarentine thinking it vain to remonstrate against the indelicacy of accepting an invitation, which must necessarily be attended with so much inconvenience to the person by whom it was made, was silent for some minutes, and then began talking with one of the children, whom finding more intelligent than the rest, she amused herself with during the remainder of the time they waited; whilst Mrs. Barclay, who perhaps had scarcely looked into a book before since she quitted school, took up an old magazine, and sat yawning over it till the dinner was announced.

The instant they rose from table, Mrs. Barclay, by this time as much fickened of her *frolic* as Clarentine had long been before, looked at her watch, and declared it was so late they must "make the best of their way home directly."

"No, no, Dame Barclay," cried Mrs. Watkins, laughing, "not quite so fast neither! Do you know that to make you amends for your balk in Goodman's Fields,

I sent

I sent off a boy to Hampstead, before we sat down to dinner, to acquaint Mr. Lenham that I should keep you here this evening to go to the play with me? Ay, and what's more," added she, "you may stay and take a bed here if you like."

Joy lighted up every feature in Mrs. Barclay's face at this most welcome intelligence. As eager now to set off for the theatre as she had the moment before been to return home, she allowed Mrs. Watkins no time to order tea: but like an impatient child, protesting she could not "settle to any thing," and had rather "stand at the play-house door till it was opened, than sit where she was fidgetting and thinking about it an hour before-hand," she persuaded that lady, though it was yet scarcely more than five o'clock, to set out with her immediately, and drew the wearied but unopposing Clarentine, who was allowed no option, away with her.

In any other party, or in any other state of mind, however, the prospect of visiting for the *first time*, not only a *London* theatre, but a theatre of *any* kind—for hitherto Clarentine had never been to a play in her life--would have afforded her

her the liveliest pleasure. Nay, as it was, the cheerful animal spirits so natural to her age and genuine character, were insensibly revived at the idea; and though less restless, and less perturbed than her *buxom* companion, she was scarcely less pleased, and scarcely less desirous of reaching the scene of so much expected felicity.

They had not proceeded far, though Mrs. Barclay walked with a swiftness that was almost too much even for the light and active Clarentine, when, driving towards them with great rapidity, she perceived Mr. Eltham's carriage, and Eltham himself within it. She shrunk behind her two conductors at this sight, hoping to escape his notice; but Eltham's eyes, quick and discerning, had caught a transient view of her, and before she had time to congratulate herself upon her fancied escape, the carriage suddenly stopped, and he was at her elbow—

“ My fair Clarentine!” cried he, with his accustomed impetuosity, “ by what fortunate chance have I the happiness of meeting you? Where at such an hour can you be going? and how is it,” looking earnestly

earnestly at her, “ I behold you here without *your Guardian?*”

Clarentine replying only to his first enquiries, answered —

“ I came to town this morning upon some business, and am now going to the play.”

“ To the play?” repeated Eltham, “ I am very glad I know it, for I meant to have gone this evening to Hampstead.— Are you not very early, however?”

“ O, that’s no matter;” said Mrs. Barclay, “ we shall get the better places for’t.”

“ And where, madam,” resumed Eltham, “ may I be allowed to ask, do you mean to sit?”

“ In the pit.” answered she—

Eltham upon this looked at Clarentine with an air that seemed to imply, “ and, do *you* sit there too?” But Clarentine unconscious of his meaning, and perfectly ignorant which was the best, or which the worst place in the house, remained silent, and walked tranquilly on.

In a few minutes, Eltham, who seemed to have been debating within himself how he should act, and whose carriage during
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this time had slowly followed him, beckoned to his servant, and bidding him go home, ordered him to tell the coachman likewise, he should not want him again.

Then flying after Clarentine, who, regardless of his stopping, had herself proceeded forward, and nearly reached the end of the street.—“ I intend myself the pleasure of going to the play with you,” cried he.

“ Lord, Mr. Eltham,” exclaimed Mrs. Barclay, “ what should you go for? I dare say you have not dined yet.”

“ My dear madam,” cried Eltham, laughing, “ do you think I am a man of so little taste as not infinitely to prefer *your* company to the gross pleasures of the table?”

“ I think, at least,” replied Mrs. Barclay drily, “ there *is* a certain person in the world whom you infinitely prefer to *every thing*, though I a’n’t such a fool as not to know that is’n’t *me* !”

“ You do me great injustice,” resumed he ironically, “ for were I, indeed, susceptible of an exclusive attachment, upon whom could I better fix my choice?”

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This speech was rather too ambiguous for Mrs. Barclay's powers of comprehension; she felt not its absurdity, nor was pained by its ridicule; and therefore walked on without taking of it the slightest notice.

They were now arrived at the play-house door, which though it yet, as had been foreseen, remained unopened, was already crowded with eager expectants, impatient to gain admission. Eltham cast an anxious look towards Clarentine as they advanced, and saw her turn pale at the scene of confusion in which she was about to be involved. She mechanically caught hold of his arm (which he had before vainly offered) and starting at every loud shout she heard, drawing fearfully back upon the arrival of every fresh party, and dreading to be entirely surrounded, very soon completely lost sight not only of the dauntless Mrs. Barclay, but of her friend.

Eltham, whom her terror concerned, though her reluctance to proceed delighted, moved as she moved, and retreated as she retreated. His manly figure, his height, and commanding aspect secured her from the danger of being
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spoken to, for no one, seeing her so protected, had the courage to attempt it; but as she had now withdrawn from that part of the crowd where the anxiety and the throng was the greatest, she became an object of much attention to many of the idle lookers-on, who without intending to go in, stood unconcerned spectators of the bustle, and whom on all sides Eltham heard remarking — “ She’s a devilish pretty girl !” “ How well she puts on that look of timidity !” “ Ay, to be sure, she’s no favourite with her companion !”—and many other similar observations, which provoked him so much, that, earnestly addressing her, he at length exclaimed—

“ For heaven’s sake, my dearest creature, determine upon something, and either try once more to go forward, or suffer me to see you home; for here you are liable to nothing but insult and impertinence !”

Startled by this remonstrance, and now for the first time, perceiving the offensive curiosity she had excited, she endeavoured to gain more courage, and agreed to move on. The doors opened at the same moment, and a general rush immediately

diately ensuing, she was instantly enclosed on every side, impelled irresistibly forward, and pressed, staggered, and overpowered to so great a degree, that after vainly contending for some time, in agonies unspeakable with the fearful apprehensions that seized her, she lost all command over herself, and uttering a piercing shriek, fell back without sense or motion in Eltham's arms.

To describe the consternation and distress with which he was filled at that moment would be impossible. Encompassed by a set of people, who, callous and unmoved, stared with vacant surprise, at his speechless burthen, and then proceeded forward in thoughtless indifference to her fate, it seemed to require almost supernatural strength to repel the torrent that oppressed him, or to force himself a passage through it. Rage, however, and indignation lent him vigour, and in defiance of every obstacle, sternly commanding those about him to make way, terrifying some by threats, and subduing others by entreaty, he at length accomplished his purpose, and bore her safely,

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though still inanimate, to the first shop he found open.

The compassionate assistance that was there afforded her, in a very short time brought her back to life and recollection. She smiled gratefully upon Eltham for his care and attention, and thanking the woman of the shop, who with much civility pressed her to stay till she was more recovered, declared perfectly able to go, and begged to have a coach sent for, that she might return home immediately.

“ I think, indeed,” said Eltham, “ that will be your best plan ; but you still seem too much hurried and discomposed to remove so soon. Sit here a few minutes longer, and let me before you enter the coach see some degree of colour return to your cheeks, and some of their usual vivacity re-animate your eyes. You are now by much too wan and ghostly a figure to be trusted beyond the reach of assistance.”

Clarentine wishing to send either a note or message to Mrs. Watkins, to assure Mrs. Barclay, on her return from the play, of her safety, agreed to a few minutes delay on that account, and writing
upon

upon the back of a letter, as legibly as her yet unsteady hand would allow her, a few lines to that effect, she committed them to the care of the mistress of the shop, who promised they should be safely delivered.

A boy belonging to the house was then dispatched for a coach, and Clarentine hearing it approach, arose to go.

Eltham, taking her hand to lead her out, said, "I make no apology, Miss Delmington, for presuming to accompany you; ill as you have been, it is absolutely necessary you should not go alone. Nay," continued he, observing that with a look of extreme seriousness, she was about to speak, "do not attempt to oppose it, for upon this occasion you will find *me* as absolute as *yourself*."

He then made a passing bow to the mistress of the shop, and handing Clarentine into the coach, jumped in after her, and directed the coachman whither to drive.

Clarentine observing a profound silence for some minutes after they were seated, Eltham, a little piqued, at length said—

“ My dearest Miss Delmington, I perceive with concern, that upon the present, as upon every other occurrence, I have had the misfortune to displease you. Why, however, should it be so? Why cannot you consider me in a more friendly view? Have I so totally sunk myself in your good opinion, so utterly forfeited all title to your confidence, that, at a moment like this—requiring protection, yet alone, and unattended—you fear to trust yourself with me ?”

Clarentine ashamed and distressed, scarcely knew what answer to make to a speech so serious, and so reproachful; she stammered out, however, a few words of scarcely-intelligible acknowledgment; and then, seeking to change the subject, said—

“ How long will it be, Sir, before you go down to Welwyn park? I understood you meant to spend there the greatest part of the shooting season?”

“ I did ;” replied Eltham—“ but motives, which, if I dared, I would frankly acknowledge to you, have detained me in town. Are you *very* impatient, however, for my departure?”

“ Would

“ Would an answer in the affirmative,” asked Clarentine smiling, “ be remarkably civil ?”

“ Perhaps not : but from *you* I dispense with *civility*, in favour of *candour*. Speak to me then, as you think, and honestly say, do you wish me to go ?”

“ I really wish you to do nothing but what most suits your own convenience. You cannot suppose, Mr. Eltham, I have any desire to take upon myself the direction of your conduct !”—

“ A more *jesuitical* personage than you are,” cried Eltham, “ I scarcely ever met with ? you seem to have made the art of prevarication your peculiar study, and have obtained a degree of proficiency in it, that does honour to your application !”

He then attempted to turn the conversation upon the subject of Somerset : but that was a point on which Clarentine was impenetrable indeed ! and on which her answers were so laconic and so guarded, that Eltham, renewing his reproaches, and proceeding so far as even openly to accuse her of dissimulation, awakened in her a species of indignation which drew from her a retort so spirited,

and so severe, that, silenced and offended in his turn, one of those mutual and almost sudden pauses ensued, the consequence, so frequently, of his vehemence and impetuosity.

He was the first, however, at length to speak—

“ Upon my honour,” said he, in a tone which, though it proved him still a little angry, was more good-humoured than Clarentine expected, “ I sincerely believe we were destined to be, time immemorial, had no malign influence stepped in between us, a pair of *true* and *veritable* lovers! We quarrel with, we provoke and affront each other with all the persevering ingenuity imaginable! Every perverse practice that lovers are said to delight in, we likewise perpetually run into. All that is wanting to complete the resemblance, are the enchanting transitions from anger to forgiveness—the delicious *reconciliations* that usually follow these short-lived tempests!”

“ I should think very ill,” said Clarentine, “ of a lover, who made it his study wantonly to *offend*, merely to have the pleasure of *appeasing* me.”

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“Do you then prefer the lifeless insipidity of an attachment composed only of smiles, and monotonous serenity, to the animated and ever-varying transports of a passion, which sometimes breaks out into petulance and caprice, then melts again into tenderness and complacency?”

Clarentine with a smile replied—

“Calmness and serenity, however *monotonous* or *insipid*, I should always prefer to such transient, and unreasonable transports.”

“Ah, Clarentine!” exclaimed he, almost involuntarily seizing her hand, “I cannot, I do not believe you! The brilliancy, the sparkling intelligence of your eyes, the glow of sensibility diffused over your whole countenance, convinces me it is impossible a love so cold, so languid, should constitute the sole emotion of your heart! you were born to *inspire* and to *participate* in sentiments far more animated and fervent!”

Clarentine, extremely disgusted at the incorrigible freedom that led him perpetually to address her in a strain so flighty and improper—particularly, as that freedom never so offensively displayed itself

as when they were alone, and therefore seemed to wear the aspect of design and premeditation—now said very gravely—

“Mr Eltham, I am unwilling to entertain so very ill an opinion of you, as to suppose the continual uneasiness you occasion me by such extraordinary language can be *intentional*: but as I perceive that to talk to me at all, and to talk to me in a manner that gives me pain, is with you invariably the same thing, be assured this is the *last time* that any circumstance whatever, short of absolute compulsion, shall again induce me to accept your attendance, or commit myself to your care!”

This timely, and serious rebuke, immediately convinced Eltham he had presumed too far upon the well-known placability of her disposition, and could not be too quick in seeking to make his peace. He immediately therefore—and with unwonted humility—endeavoured to obtain her pardon; protested he would make it the study of his whole life never in the same manner to offend her again; and, for the rest of the way, miraculously kept his promise!

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

ON their arrival at Hampstead, Mr. Lenham hearing her voice in the entrance, and surprized, after the message he had received, at her early return, hastened out to meet and welcome her. Clarentine rushed forward the instant he appeared, and delighted once again to be restored to his protection, was beginning an account of her adventures, when perceiving immediately behind him, regarding her with an air of grave and frigid solemnity, Captain Somerset! her voice faltered, she turned pale, and scarcely able to refrain from tears, walked dejectedly into the parlour without venturing to speak, or look up again.

They all followed her; and Mr. Lenham taking her hand, and addressing her with the kindest solicitude, said—

“ I fear, my dear young friend, the troubles and the fatigues of the day have been too much for you. You look

harrassed and dispirited ; 'tell me, where did Mrs. Barclay lead you ? Where is she now, and how came you back without her ?'

Clarentine, in answer to these friendly interrogatories, now made an effort to speak, and as briefly as she could recounted all that had befallen her. Then casting a timid glance towards Somerset, who, yet silent and thoughtful, sat leaning against the table in an attitude of profound attention, she forced a smile, and said—

“ Though *you*, my dear Mr. Lenham kindly suspended your judgment, till you heard my defence—*others*, I fear, have been less candid !”

Somerset, looking hurt and surprised, rose from his seat, and begun walking about the room in evident agitation ; whilst Mr. Lenham said—

“ You deceive yourself, my dear young lady ; we were all persuaded that your delay was as involuntary as it was alarming ; and when Mrs. Watkins's messenger came, and Captain Somerset, who is but this moment returned from town where he dined, learnt it was designed to carry you to the play, his uneasiness on your account

count was so great, that, just as you arrived, he was upon the point of setting off for London again, to endeavour to assist you in getting out, and to see you safe home."

"My interference, however," said Somerset, suspending his walk whilst he spoke, and then slowly proceeding, "would have been superfluous; I knew not, at the moment I planned it, how well Miss Delmington was attended already."

"Mr. Eltham," cried Clarentine, cruelly disconcerted by the coldness and seriousness with which this was uttered, "met me by mere accident; and I am certain, till the instant I was taken ill, had no intentions of returning with me."

"At all events," resumed Somerset, "my services would have been of little worth, and perhaps I have reason to congratulate myself that their untimely offer met not with a *second* rejection."

Eltham, who during this little dialogue had, by turns, surveyed the two speakers with looks of astonishment and curiosity, now gaily said—

“ The novelty of this scene is really enchanting ! On one side we behold a grave and venerable man,” bowing to Mr. Lenham, “ who in his capacity of Guardian, though anxious for the welfare of his ward, is mild and gentle ; willing to credit her vindication, and desirous of restoring her to confidence. On the other,” looking towards Somerset, “ lo ! where there stands a young, but (pardon the expression) incredulous and rigid censor, who in *his* capacity of Guardian, though tenacious of his privileges, does nothing to secure them ; and who assuming the austerity that belongs in general only to age, leaves, at once, the gallantry and the indulgence of youth, to his senior in office.”

Somerset, who towards the end of this speech, had stopped short and sternly listened to its conclusion with his eyes steadily fixed upon Eltham, was now beginning some very sarcastic reply to it, when Mr. Lenham interposing, said—

“ Captain Somerset, it cannot really be your intention seriously to resent this speech ? a speech uttered in raillery, and
meant

meant but as a good-humoured reproof of your gravity."

Somerfet checked himself; and though his countenance resumed not immediately all its wonted calmness, forbore saying any thing farther.

Meanwhile, the grieved and humbled Clarentine, one moment petrified at Somerfet's chilling indifference, the next frightened at his apprehended asperity, sat motionless and silent, with her eyes fixed upon the floor, and her whole heart so saddened and so depressed, that it was with the utmost difficulty she kept her place, or knew how to disperse the tears that were every instant ready to start.

The sight of this dejection, the paleness of her countenance, and the remembrance of the distressing scene he had witnessed in the morning, excited Mr. Lenham's utmost inquietude and concern. He moved towards her, and whilst Eltham was speaking to Miss Barclay, who at that moment entered, and Somerfet with affected unconcern was looking over the news paper, entreated her, in the most anxious and pressing terms, to tell him

what it was that caused in her so melancholy a change?

Clarentine, overpowered by this gentleness and sympathy, and no longer able to command the tears she had so long struggled to restrain, now said in a low and faltering voice—

“ Oh, do not, dearest Sir, do not speak to me with this oppressing kindness, I conjure you! Could I, dared I confide in any one, it should be in you: but mine is a secret that *ought not* to be told!”

“ You amaze me!” cried he, “ what secret can be deposited in a heart so guileless and so pure as yours, that you need blush to reveal?”

“ Alas, Sir!” exclaimed Clarentine, sighing, “ how little you suspect the state of that heart you seek thus benevolently to penetrate. It is filled at this moment with every evil passion. Pride, resentment, envy, and ingratitude assail it by turns; and, oh Sir, assail it so forcibly, that I know not how to repel them!”

Mr. Lenham inexpressibly astonished at this speech, looked at her a few minutes in silent consternation; then fearing they might be observed, said—

“ This

“ This is no place in which to solicit you for an explanation ; but to-morrow I hope you will not refuse to gratify a curiosity you have so painfully raised ! ”

Clarentine's heart was too full to speak, and Mr. Lenham, kindly pressing her hand as he arose, walked away.

A few minutes after, Eltham took his seat, and earnestly examining her, at length abruptly said—

“ Has Mr. Lenham been playing the same part your *other* guardian did ? You have been weeping, Miss Delmington ; you seem distressed—Wherefore ? What has occasioned it ? ”

Too much disturbed to attend to him, Clarentine turned from his enquiring eye with embarrassment and uneasiness, and assuring him he had mistaken fatigue for sorrow, besought him to leave her—

“ I will ; ” cried he, rising immediately, “ it would be barbarous at such a time to importune you longer. ”

He then rejoined the party round the table ; and Clarentine perceiving she might quit the room without being observed, very soon after went up stairs.

The

The tacit consent she had given to Mr. Lenham's request of an explanation the next day, there recurred to her with the most painful sensations of self reproach. Should she, acknowledging her weakness to Somerset's most approved and established friend, voluntarily put herself in danger of having it betrayed to Somerset himself? The idea was insupportable!

"Who I," cried she, "I be the publisher of my own disgrace? I impower any one to report to him a confession so humiliating; disclose not only my love, but my disappointment, my vain wishes, my jealousy and regret? No, never! Somerset's indifference I may learn to bear: but to become the object either of his pity, or his contempt, would be too much!"

The result of these angry self-interrogatories was, a fixed determination assiduously to shun the half-promised, but mortifying conference to which she expected to be called; or, if unavoidably drawn into it, frankly to declare she already repented having even gone so far, and most earnestly wished Mr. Lenham would release her from an engagement she found it so difficult to fulfil.

"Perhaps,"

“ Perhaps,” cried she, “ he may, at first, be tempted to accuse me of caprice and inconsistency ; he may justly wonder, that whilst, at one moment, I speak with such unguarded openness as even to lead to a supposition I *wish* to be penetrated, the next, I should thus strangely recant. Far better, however, is it, he should conjecture the worst from my silence, than for a single instant imagine my confidence is intended as a call upon his compassion, and granted merely with a view of exciting him to plead for me with Somerset ! *Plead* for me,” added she, indignantly, “ Good God, in such circumstances as mine—in *any* circumstances—*plead* for the favour of a man decidedly attached to another ! Oh Somerset ! low as I am sunk, hopeless, grieved, and dispirited as I feel, not even to obtain *your* commiseration would I subject myself to the suspicion of a meanness so abject ! ”

The pride which thus seasonably came to her support, aided by reason and cooler reflection, now led her also to ask herself, why she indulged against him a degree of resentment, which, free as he was to chuse for himself, and painfully as
it

it embittered her own existence, was, at once, so unjust, and so irrational? He was under no engagement to her; had never professed for her any other sentiments than those of friendship, and undesigning regard. Had she any right then, either to manifest open blame, or cherish secret displeasure? Was it not as degrading to evince such unwarranted petulance, as even to betray her unreturned partiality?—She felt, she acknowledged it; and firmly determined henceforward to reform her conduct; and, if not too late, once more to seek his *friendship*, though she renounced all claim to his *love*.—“ I owe”, thought she, “ this effort to my own character; I owe it to Somerset’s past kindness and attention. My reserve, my coldness, inexplicable to him as it must appear after all the confidence and cordiality I lately shewed him, can only tend to infuse into his mind as unfavourable an opinion of my temper as of my heart. He can never know whence the change originated; and consequently can never impute it to any better cause than versatility and fickleness of disposition.”

In

In pursuance of these reflections, composing her countenance before she descended to supper, and determining to meet Somerset with all the friendly cheerfulness in her power, she entered the parlour so fully expecting to find him there, and so anxiously solicitous to prove the effect of her newly adopted plan, that when she found he was already gone—gone without asking to see her, without leaving for her the slightest message, or appearing to remember she was in the house—her intended exertions were forgotten, her spirits again failed her, and heartless, desponding, and afflicted, she took her place in utter silence, and too absent to join in the conversation, had she even wished it, listened to all Eltham's gay rattle (for he still remained) with the most insurmountable and involuntary gravity, and the first moment it was in her power, hastened back to her own apartment.

The following day passed without any remarkable occurrence, unless the absence of Somerset, whom she had hitherto, since his return from sea, rarely omitted seeing or hearing from during some part
of

of every day, could be called such. Mrs. Barclay, after sleeping in town, returned to dinner in high spirits; declared she had never been so much entertained; laughed at Clarentine for the *unaccountable* terror that had so strangely overpowered her at the play-house door; and finally, received a very tart reprimand from her fair daughter, for not having sent Mrs. Watkins's messenger early enough to allow of her getting to town in time to make one of their party.

The mother defended herself with her accustomed *sang froid*, and the daughter persevered in her complaints with her accustomed querulousness, till Clarentine, equally wearied of them and their subject, took up her work, and left them to finish the dispute by themselves.

The anxious looks of Mr. Lenham, his eagerness to speak to her, and the manifest concern and displeasure with which he observed her sedulousness to avoid it, gave her so much pain, and at the same time embarrassed her so cruelly in his presence, that towards evening, retiring for a few minutes to her own room, she wrote the following note, and delivered it to
him

him unperceived, as they were rising from tea—

“ To see you, my dearest Sir, look so offended and so grave, occasions me the greatest uneasiness. I acknowledge that you have just cause, after what passed last night, to resent my present reserve, since for one who meant to say *no more*, I certainly then said infinitely *too much* : but I spoke inconsiderately, and at that moment was not aware of the strange confidence to which I seemed to be leading. Calmer reflections, dear Sir, have taught me to believe you would yourself disapprove my proceeding further ; and the pain that it would give to your benevolent mind to know the true source of my concern without possessing the power of alleviating it, would, I am certain, induce you rather to condemn than applaud the facility with which it was revealed.

“ Attempt not then, dearest Sir, to discover more plainly the secrets of this wayward heart ; disturb not, perplex not yourself about me. I am unworthy, at this instant, of your generous attention. When time, however, shall have restored me to reason, and I can look back upon the
events

events that are now passing with indifference and tranquillity, then will I, at the same moment that I call for your congratulations, teach you to smile at my former folly, and join with you in moralizing upon the instability, as well of human happiness, as human sorrow!"

This billet, though it quieted not all Mr. Lenham's uneasy apprehensions, softened him in favour of the gentle writer, and made him cautious either of again questioning, or appearing to watch her. Tenderly solicitous to promote her happiness; loving her as a father; and anxious by every possible means to avert affliction from her, it is not to be supposed, however, he could so easily relinquish the earnest desire he had to investigate into a mystery so alarming, and so extraordinary. His observation increased, therefore, with his wish to conceal it; and all Clarentine's future prudence, all her care and her discretion were scarcely adequate to the difficulty of evading his penetration.

. She had now steadily adhered to her new plan of conduct for some days—treated Somerset with all her former ease
and

and complacency—revived, in some measure, his wonted chearfulness—resumed her old habits—read, walked, and conversed with him, as on his first arrival; and, though she had never yet been put to the trial, determined even when alone with him to behave with the same friendliness and unreserve; when, one morning soon after breakfast, whilst she was sitting by herself in the parlour, he unexpectedly entered, but stopping short on perceiving her, seemed to hesitate a moment whether he should advance, and then, shutting the door, slowly approached her.—

“ I have wished, my dear Miss Delmington, for some time,” said he, sitting down by her, and after a short silence, gravely addressing her, “ to have a few minutes private conversation with you. Are you at leisure now? and may I venture to speak with all the sincerity you formerly authorized?”

Clarentine, too much confounded by the seriousness of his looks and voice, and the intelligible, though gentle reproach his last words conveyed, to be able immediately to answer him, Somerset

set perceiving her embarrassment, added with a half smile—

“What is it, my dearest Miss Delmington apprehends? Does she believe me so *very* a *censor* as I was described to her? Does my *austerity* so much alarm her, that she even fears to speak to me?”

“O no, no!” cried Clarentine with quickness, “I am ready, I am anxious to hear, and to answer every question you can ask. I have no fears but of having, perhaps, of late, too justly merited your disapprobation!”

“Discard, discard from your mind,” cried Somerset, earnestly, “all such vain and causeless terrors! To *disapprove* I claim no right, even if I had the will; I am *not*, Miss Delmington, the severe and arbitrary monitor you suspect! Could you forget that such a connection as guardian and ward subsisted between us, and view me only as a brother and a friend—a friend whom in former times you used to trust—a brother whom you once, I believe, loved—then should I fearlessly proceed, and frankly avow the motives that urged me to request this conference.”

“Proceed

“ Proceed then, unhesitatingly,” cried Clarentine, with warmth; “ speak with the certainty of being only interpreted as you could wish!”

Softened and delighted by this speech, Somerset appeared half tempted to imprint upon the hand he held a kiss of gratitude, and acknowledgment. He restrained himself, however, and resuming the discourse, in a tone of more than usual gentleness and kindness, said—

“ Could I describe to Miss Delmington the anxious solicitude with which, not only *now*, but *ever*, I have wished to see her happy; could she form any idea of the deep and animated interest I take in all that relates to her, the question I am about to ask would require no other apology than the affectionate sentiment by which it is dictated; as she can have no conception, however, of that sentiment—of half its zeal and fervour—I must rely upon her indulgence, and the rectitude of my own intentions for pardon.”

He then went on to enquire, for Clarentine was too much agitated to interrupt him,

him, with all the confiderate delicacy the fubject demanded, how long ſhe had been acquainted with Mr. Eltham? What ſhe believed were his views in coming ſo frequently to the houſe, and paying her ſuch marked attention? and what her own opinion and deſigns reſpecting him were?

“ If, my lovely friend,” added he, “ you have any reaſon to ſuſpect him of being a mere idle *flirt*, one of thoſe deſpicable and preſuming coxcombs, known under the denomination of *male-coquettes*, the more ſpeedily you authorize either Mr. Lenham or *me*, (in my formidable *capacity of Guardian*) to diſcard him—or, if you prefer it, the more ſpeedily you announce to him his diſmiſſion yourſelf, the more juſt it will be to your own character. If, on the contrary, as appears far more probable, his deſigns are ſerious and honourable, and are, beſides, ſuch as you approve, and feel willing to encourage, the ſooner, through the interference of ſome friend, he is brought to declare them”—

“ The *better?*” asked Clarentine, interrupting him in a faint voice, and turn-

ing extremely pale, “the better, do you think, Mr. Somerfet?”

Somerfet changed colour, looked irresolute and disconcerted, and casting down his eyes, after a short pause, replied—

“I acknowledge myself by no means a competent judge in this case either of the *better* or the *worst*. Your own heart, Miss Delmington, must determine for you; and if I have presumed too far, I entreat your forgiveness; it was not, you will believe, I hope, my design to *dictate* its decision.”

“O no,” cried Clarentine recovering herself, “that I am persuaded of!—But Sir, before we drop this subject—a subject painful to me to talk upon, and I am sure, by no means pleasant to you, further than as it enables you to prove your general good-wishes and concern for me—suffer me to entreat that on no account whatever *you* will speak upon it to Mr. Eltham. All that I may wish should be said, I will either request Mr. Lenham to repeat for me, or undertake to tell him myself!”

Somerfet only bowed; he ventured not to ask what that *all* would be, neither did

he chuse to pursue the conversation. After a short interval, therefore, rising, and taking his hat, he said he was going back to town; asked if she had any commands, and on her saying, "none," wished her good morning, and left the room.

"To what," thought Clarentine, when he was gone, "to what would this singular conversation tend? Does he really *wish* me to encourage Eltham? Were his enquiries only meant to find out my real sentiments concerning him, or was it their aim to prove to me that he was ready to favour another's pretensions? Incomprehensible Somerset! In voice, in looks, so tender and so anxious, in heart so regardless and so indifferent! Oh, why address me in language so flattering, talk to me of his *solicitude*, his *affection*, and his zeal, and at the same moment, by the tranquil unconcern with which he shews himself ready to resign me, plant a dagger in my breast!"

During the remainder of the day, as he appeared no more, she had leisure to deliberate with herself concerning the part she had now to act with Eltham. Superior to all coquetry—unacquainted
indeed,

indeed, but by report, either with its artifices or its nature, she found no difficulty, as it was her decided wish to be released from his assiduities, in coming to the resolution of immediately putting an end to them; yet how, in her own person, was this to be effected? She could not tell him she believed him to be in love with her—apprehended he had formed presumptuous expectations—and thought it her duty to check them! He had never but once formally avowed himself—and that once, the only time his language at any period took the form of a positive declaration, though he had proferred to her his *heart*, his *fortune*, sworn even to dedicate his very *life* to her; his *hand*, or his *faith* had never been comprised in the enumeration! To treat him, consequently, as a serious pretender would be absurd—would be almost like *asking* for his addresses, and telling him they were expected. All, therefore, that she had to do, was, to trust the business to the management of Mr. Lenham; to beg him in his own name, and as if wholly at his own instigation, to represent to him the impropriety of his constant visits, and to

declare to him, very positively, that they could no longer be permitted.—

A commission Mr. Lenham would have felt himself more gladly disposed to accept, could not have been devised. Eltham's wild and flighty disposition; the selfishness, and indelicacy with which—solely for his own amusement, without appearing to have any determinate object—he pursued, and trifled with a young woman not only of such unimpeachable character, but also of such respectable connections, and such modest and unequivocal propriety of behaviour, had long offended him extremely; it was therefore with the utmost readiness he undertook to execute the task assigned him, the very first time Eltham again came to the house.

C H A P. XII.

THE admiration which Miss Barclay had conceived, even from the first hour she beheld him, for Mr. Eltham; the veneration she had for his splendid advantages of birth and fortune; the striking superiority of his fashionable deportment, and easy address over those of every other man she had till now conversed with, had so powerfully operated in his behalf, that, without its being necessary, according to Sophia's advice, for Clarentine to interfere in the business, she had indulged (unchecked either by her own pride or his neglect) a very tender, though hitherto it must be acknowledged, very unprosperous predilection for him. The hard-hearted and persevering indifference, however, with which she daily observed that Clarentine received his attentions; the almost positive opinion she began to entertain that even were he to offer himself to her she would reject him, had of

late infused into her mind a faint hope, that, by pursuing with him the same conduct Mrs. Hertford had adopted with respect to Capt. Somerset, she might succeed, perhaps, in detaching him from so ungrateful a mistress, and win him over to herself.

It now, therefore, became her constant study, by every method in her power, to attract his notice, and engage his admiration; her dress, her language, her attitudes, her very voice betrayed the anxiety with which she not only prepared for his arrival, but sought, when he was present, to make herself conspicuous. Had *he* been grave and reserved, *she* would have attempted to appear soft and pensive—as it was, seeing him always easy and careless; often—to her at least,—impertinent; sometimes negligent and indolent, at others, active and animated, she endeavoured to model her own character upon his, and by turns, to imitate every change that either accident or design produced in his behaviour.

When Clarentine was not present, exclusively to engross his attention, there were moments when, in preference to sitting

ting wholly unemployed, he would vouchsafe with an air of condescension, and frequently in the midst of a yawn, to address to her a few unmeaning and exaggerated compliments, for the mere pleasure of seeing her look languishing and affected. Once or twice, he had even given himself the trouble, called upon by her repeated though indirect challenges, to romp with her; and after tearing her cloaths, tiring and overpowering her, (for on these occasions he was seldom extremely gentle) used to throw himself into a seat very composedly, and as he lounged back in his chair amused himself with laughing at the strange plight he had put her into, and the disconsolate figure she cut!

As Miss Barclay neither possessed great refinement, nor great penetration, she was as little disposed to resent his freedom, as she was capable of discerning what his real sentiments concerning her were. All she aspired to was his attention; and proud of obtaining it in any way whatever, to the more, or the less respect with which it came accompanied, she was totally indifferent.

It was on the third day after Clarentine's little explanation with Somerset, that at his usual hour, just as the family had met to tea, Eltham, for the first time since the night he had accompanied her from town, made his appearance. The party he found assembled, in addition to Mr. Lenham's usual inmates, consisted of Mrs. Denbigh, and Mrs. Hertford. Somerset had been there before dinner, but went away in less than hour.

Clarentine's reception of him, as at all other times, was civil, but quiet and composed. Not so Miss Barclay; her eyes danced with pleasure the moment he entered; with an eagerness and officiousness that made even Mrs. Hertford stare, she drove young Blandford from the tea-table, and disturbed every body else at it, to make room for him next her; looked at, spoke to no other person during the whole time he sat by her; and in short, behaved with such extreme folly and forwardness, that Eltham, by no means the last to perceive it, had some difficulty, more than once, to forbear laughing in her face.

As soon as the tea-things were removed, Clarentine, who, though she made it a
point

point when Mrs. Barclay was alone to sit with her in an evening, thought herself exempted from this necessity, when the contrary was the case, rose to leave the room: but Eltham abruptly starting up, and stepping between her and the door, said in a low and supplicating voice, as she still advanced towards it—

“ You do not mean to consign me over to this intolerable circle the whole evening ?”

“ Intolerable !” repeated Clarentine in the same tone, “ Is Mr. Lenham, is Mrs. Denbigh intolerable ?”

“ If they were angels,” answered Eltham, taking her hand to lead her back, “ when you are gone, I shall wish them all utterly annihilated !” then raising his voice, “ What have you done, my dear Miss Delmington, with your harp ? Do you never play now ?”

“ Yes,” replied Clarentine, who rather than occasion any further contention, had walked back to her seat, “ sometimes.”

“ Suppose, my young friend, ” said Mrs. Denbigh, “ you have it brought down this evening, and attempt by

“ A solemn air, and the best comforter

“ To an unsettled fancy,”*

to quiet and tranquillize Mr. Eltham?”

“ An excellent proposal;” cried Mrs. Hertford smiling, “ though one that, I own, seems to be applying to Mr. Eltham something too much of the nature of the *Tarantula!*”

“ I am not,” said Eltham, “ to be laughed out of my purpose; therefore, Miss Delmington, suffer me to entreat you *will* send for it, or permit—what I should still prefer—my attending you to your own apartment to hear you.”

“ A modest petition, truly!” cried Miss Barclay sneeringly, “ I hope Miss Delmington means to comply with it.”

Clarentine’s only answer to this was a request that Miss Barclay, who sat nearest it, would ring the bell to order the harp down stairs.

It was soon brought; and Clarentine, who had now taken regular lessons of a master for some time, and really played with admirable taste and expression, astonished and charmed Eltham so much by

* Tempest.

the extraordinary progress she had made since he last heard her at Sidmouth, that he would not suffer her to rise, till the repeated yawns of Mrs. Barclay, and the loud talking of her daughter, warned her, by immediately stopping, not to lull the one to sleep, or rouse the other to impatience.

Eltham thanked her, when she got up, in the most animated terms, for the extreme pleasure she had given him, and was proceeding to ask her some questions concerning the music she had been playing, when Miss Barclay, peevishly interrupting him, said—

“ I fancy, Mr. Eltham, you would not be so fond of such dolorous ditties if you was’n’t in love ? ”

Every body stared, and Eltham, after a moment of astonished silence, said with a forced smile—

“ And who told you, my fair interrogator, that I *was* in love ? ”

“ O Lord,” cried she, “ we all know *that*, and with *who*, too ! ”

Then darting an angry glance at Clarentine, who, amazed and confounded, stood gravely looking at her, with her

usual abruptness when any thing discomposed her, she left the room.

A dead silence succeeded her departure for some minutes; Mrs. Denbigh, however, who sat near the fire before which Eltham was standing, at length interrupted it, by saying to him in a low voice, and with an arch smile—

“ If your heart was not gone already, you could have no chance of resisting the amiable creature who has just left us!”

Eltham, perfectly regardless of the presence either of her mother or her friend, coolly answered, as he leaned gently back against the side of the chimney—

“ Love is a calmer, gentler joy,
“ Smooth are his looks, and soft his pace;
“ Her Cupid is a blackguard boy,
“ And runs his link full in your face!”

This ridiculous, but apt quotation, conquered the gravity not only of Mrs. Denbigh, Mrs. Hertford and Clarentine, but even of Mr. Lenham. Mrs. Barclay, however, who, though she but imperfectly understood its direct tenour, very fully comprehended the unfortunate term *blackguard*, and felt herself extremely offended by it, now said with great solemnity—

“ Let

“ Let me tell you, Mr. Eltham, these are very strange liberties to take before me ; I should be glad to know why Lucy, though may-be she *is* a little pettish sometimes, should be called such low-lived names as them ? I’m sure she’s done nothing *black-guard* by you ; and as for talking of *links*, I don’t know what you can mean by it ! ”

Eltham bit his lips, and looking down as if apprehensive his laughing eyes would betray him, said with some hesitation—

“ Upon my word, my dearest madam, you totally misunderstood me. I was far from intending any improper allusion to Miss Barclay, be assured ; there is nobody, I protest to you, that does her more justice—that sees her real merit in a clearer point of view ! ”

“ Well, well,” cried Mrs. Barclay, somewhat appeased by this *very satisfactory* apology, “ we won’t say any more about it ; I suppose you didn’t mean any harm, and I might not quite make out what you you were talking of ; for, to tell you the truth, I know but little of these matters, and never was over and above fond of poetry and verses in my life.”

The

The extreme good humour and credulous simplicity of this speech, really made Eltham half repent having ever been wicked enough to say any thing that would give her pain. He renewed his excuses and his assurances of respect with infinitely more seriousness than before; and then, finding himself perfectly restored to her good graces, changed the subject and gave the conversation a more general turn.

When he was rising to take leave, Mr. Lenham, authorized by an intelligent look from Clarentine, begged the favour of speaking with him a few minutes in his study. Eltham, though the request seemed to surprize him, immediately agreed to it, and wishing the ladies good night, took up his hat and followed him.

As soon as they were gone, Clarentine apprehensive of she knew not what, fearful of seeing Eltham, should he, after the conference was over, again return to the parlour; half wishing, yet half dreading, to hear its result; and by no means assured, proud and fiery as she well knew he could be, that he would not break out into some act of extravagance and impatience, put up her work in haste and alarm, and flew
for

for refuge to her own room, determined not to venture down again till positively convinced he had left the house.

In less than half an hour, young Blandford knocked at her door to tell her Mr. Lenham was in the parlour, and supper was ready.

“ And where is Mr. Eltham ? ” cried Clarentine eagerly—

“ On his road to London, I suppose,” answered Blandford—

“ He is not below, then ?—not in the parlour, you are sure ? ”

“ Yes, quite sure ; he has never been there since you left it.”

Clarentine upon this opened her door, and telling Blandford she was ready, accompanied him down stairs.

As she entered the supper-room, Mr. Lenham, she perceived, was walking slowly about it, looking unusually grave and thoughtful. Every body else was standing round the table waiting for him to sit down : he seemed not to observe it, however, till Clarentine appeared, when silently taking her hand, he led her towards her accustomed seat, and then walked to his own.

During

During the whole time they were at table, Clarentine watched his countenance with the most anxious attention. By degrees the passing cloud that had obscured it dispersed; he looked up at her with his wonted friendly cheerfulness; joined freely in the conversation, and before they rose from supper seemed wholly to have forgotten the little chagrin he had experienced.

This change gave her inexpressible pleasure; yet still eager to question him, contrary to her usual custom she lingered below till almost every body had quitted the parlour, and then as he was lighting his candle to go also, softly approached him, and said in a whisper—

“ May I, dear Sir, attend you for a moment to your study ?”

“ Yes, certainly,” replied he; and immediately went out with her.

When they were alone, “ Well, Sir,” cried Clarentine, hesitatingly, “ how did your conference with Mr. Etham terminate? Amicably, I hope ?”

“ On *my* part,” answered Mr. Lenham, “ perfectly so; I was firm yet civil; and when I saw how ill his pride brooked the affront, almost tempted to feel sorry for him.”

Clarentine

Clarentine smiled—"I should never have supposed," said she, "Mr. Lenham's pity could have been called forth by such a passion.—But tell me, dear Sir," added she more gravely, "has he promised to discontinue his visits in future?—May I flatter myself his affiduities are entirely at an end?"

"I believe you may; but not that if he meets with either *you* or *me* in the dark, he will hesitate to cut our throats."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Clarentine, "was he then so *very* irascible?"—

"I never before saw a man take such incredible pains to prove himself qualified for Bedlam or St. Luke's. He raved, he threatened, he absolutely, I believe, swore! and when he had vented all his choler against *us*, proceeded next to utter such vehement denunciations against the devoted Somerset—

"Good God!" interrupted Clarentine turning pale, "against Captain Somerset?"—

"Be not alarmed," resumed Mr. Lenham smiling; "these outrageous ebullitions are never, I believe, very dangerous; were they to last long, they would
infallibly

infallibly destroy the strongest constitution in Christendom, and Mr. Eltham knows better the value of his than to put it to such risk. After storming and execrating, therefore, till he was completely tired, finding I made him no answer, but went on very composedly mending my fire, he sat down to cool, and ended the conversation with as much temperance as I believe it is in his nature to feel.”—

“In his calmer moments then, Sir,” asked Clarentine, “did he say any thing that disturbed you more than in his fury? You looked, I thought, extremely vexed and serious when I first went down.”

“To deal plainly with you, my dear Miss Delmington,” answered Mr. Lenham, “he made an appeal to my *justice*, towards the latter part of our conference, that embarrassed me not a little. I had given him, tacitly at least, to understand that *you* were unacquainted with the nature of our debate; this he seemed very much to doubt: but admitting it, at length, for fact, he asked me, with all the gravity of a man who thinks himself highly aggrieved, whether, after the species of promise he had once obtained from you,
that

that when fixed in my house you would admit his visits upon the footing of a friend, I thought myself entitled, unknown to you, to deny him this privilege? Whether, in short, I thought it just to *him*, or honourable to *you*?"

"Mr. Ektham," cried Clarentine, a little indignantly, "is the only man breathing, I believe, who, knowing *how* and *where* that promise was exacted, would have ventured to speak of it to you as of one that he *deserved* should be kept. It was on my journey from Sidmouth, the night I slept at Salisbury, that, after having persecuted and frightened me till I was really glad to come to any compromise whatever, he drew it reluctantly from me, upon condition he consented immediately to quit me. This, at length, he did; and hitherto it has been solely in consideration of that engagement, extorted as it was, I have ever permitted him to see me."

"All this, my dear young lady," said Mr. Lenham, "I was utterly unacquainted with; consequently, to his serious enquiry had very little more to say, than that I would speak with you upon the subject,

subject, and ask whether it was your wish the promise should be continued or retracted. ‘If Miss Delmington,’ added I, ‘consults *me* in this affair, I believe Mr. Eltham, you know what my advice to her will be. Should you, therefore, hear nothing further from me, I beg what I have now said may be looked upon as conclusive.’ Upon this he arose, made me a very cavalier bow, and departed.”

“And peace go with him!” cried Clarentine, sighing a weight of care off her breast, “I sincerely hope, that as *my* visitor, at least, I shall see him here no more.”

She then thanked Mr. Lenham for the kindness with which he had undertaken so unpleasant a task, and taking leave of him for the night, retired to rest.

C H A P. XIII.

SOMERSET, disdaining all artifice himself, frank, honourable, and noble-minded, suspected not that it was in human nature, unless sunk to the lowest depth of depravity, to dissemble by system, and deceive upon principle. Clear-sighted and discerning in perceiving merit, he was backward in discovering errors; and while it was possible to believe any action might have a *right* motive, obstinate in not imputing to it a *wrong* one. In courage, in understanding, in fortitude a man—in heart and disposition he was still a child. The blunt, unpolished beings with whom he had been accustomed to associate, though they had infused into his character no portion of their roughness, had maintained in it and nourished all its genuine simplicity; and neither taught him the necessity of disguise, or the advantages of distrust. In favour of another, whom he wished to serve, he could be vigilant and observant; in all that related to himself

he

he was credulous and unguarded. Compassionate, kind and friendly, whoever he saw unhappy he sought to relieve; whoever he believed deserving he sought to conciliate.

A character thus open, thus undefining and liberal, it required far less address than Mrs. Hertford possessed, to work upon and influence. Quick in penetrating every thought of his honest heart, and skilful in tracing every avenue that led to its approach, she began her operations with a sagacity, a cool deliberate policy, that might have done credit to the noble principal whose agent she had condescended to become. It was not Somerset's affection she sought, or even expected to obtain; she knew too well which way the wishes of his soul pointed to have any hopes of directing them towards herself; the artless and unconscious Clarentine--Clarentine whose congenial mind so well accorded with his own, she was persuaded engrossed them wholly. Still, however, with such a man she had hopes of succeeding; it was yet possible to interest his compassion, excite his pity, though she procured not his love:
and

and, as to his fortune only, his rank in life, and independance she aspired, the feelings to which she might be indebted for his hand, were to her indifferent.

When at Portsmouth just before her marriage, she had first seen him, cold-hearted, and self-interested as she was, she had been unable to defend herself from experiencing an involuntary sentiment of admiration in his favour. The noble, graceful, and unaffected dignity of his deportment; the interesting expression of mingled animation and sweetness that characterized his countenance; the gentleness of his manners; the goodness, good-humour and spirit of his conversation, it was impossible wholly to disregard. Even Mrs. Hertford felt the influence of qualities so amiable and so striking; she felt it, however, without any diminution of her tranquillity; and had Somerset, at that time dependant upon a mercenary father, offered himself to her at the very moment her partiality for him was the greatest, Mr. Hertford, wholly his own master, and said to be very affluent, would have been unhesitatingly preferred.

Yet anxious to reserve to herself the power, whenever Somerset returned, of renewing her acquaintance with him—pleased with the prospect, though now married, of being followed and attended by him, she most assiduously courted, (in remembrance of their new relationship to Mr. Lenham, Somerset's best and earliest friend,) the intimacy of Mrs. and Miss Barclay, during the whole time she remained in England. From them, wherever he might fix, she hoped to hear of him: but long before his first voyage was over, those hopes were for a while driven from her recollection by the alarming derangement of her husband's affairs, and the melancholy necessity that drove them both to the continent.

Returning at the end of her long exile as penniless, as destitute, as when the infatuated Hertford first chose her for his ruin; disappointed in her ambitious projects of forming a second establishment abroad, and hopeless among those by whom she was too well known to form one in England, her thoughts again reverted to that Somerset, whom having seen only by accident she had hitherto
seen

an *honest sincerity* for which she seemed to expect great credit, to its pretended object, whom she found impenetrable to mere hints and looks, had till now appeared to create in him only perplexity and uneasiness. He frankly confessed to her, and *his* confession *was* honest, that his heart was no longer his own; that he felt for her the truest admiration, the utmost gratitude and the liveliest friendship; but could never hope to repay the distinction with which she honoured him with any sentiments more fervent. Mrs. Hertford sighed, heard him with blushes and with tears; protested *his* happiness was so much dearer to her than her *own*, that could she but once see it secured she cared not what fate might await her; supplicated the continuance of his regard; claimed even his compassion, and ended by declaring she would never mention her unfortunate predilection to him more.

The next day, however, the day following, and every day she could speak to him apart, the same subject was revived, the same protestations poured forth, the same lamentations indulged! Somerset, confounded, distressed, often wearied,

sometimes answered her with the most respectful seriousness, at others, gently rallied her upon the unmerited condescension with which she treated him, and besought her for both their sakes to forbear renewing a conversation he grieved to say was so useless, and was certain must be so humiliating.

Mrs. Hertford upon these occasions had the art to conceal her consternation under the more touching semblance of sorrow and despair. Sometimes also she would talk to him openly of Clarentine; insinuate that she had discovered *her* to be the object of his attachment, and with that species of guarded warmth so necessary in order to avoid all appearance of affectation, speak to him, as if involuntarily, of her beauty and her merit, and dwell with modest candour upon the many reasons she had to fear such a rival, without being able to discover one that could justify her in seeking, even if she had the power, to detach him from her.

Penetrated by this generosity, charmed from whatever quarter to hear the praises of one his heart so fondly cherished, Somerset, no longer languid, no longer absent,

sent,

sent, listened with an avidity and a delight to all she said upon the subject of Clarentine, that convinced her sagacious rival she had at length discovered a never-failing, though a borrowed magnet of lasting attraction. The hope, towards its close, of hearing that beloved name coupled with praise, made him patiently attend to all that in the early part of every conversation was irksome or embarrassing. His friendship, his concern for Mrs. Hertford redoubled; and as Clarentine's reserve encreased, the only consolation he seemed to find was in the sympathizing pity of her gentle competitor.

It had once been Mrs. Hertford's plan to infuse into his mind a jealous distrust of Eltham; that, however, as it was impossible to effect it without being often subject to seeing Eltham herself, she very soon relinquished all idea of, dreading no one's remarks or observations so much. Arch and significant as Eltham had often looked when witnessing her attentions to Somerset; thoughtless, flighty, and ungovernable as he was, he might, either designedly or by accident, reveal so many things it was her interest to keep

secret, that she trembled every hour at the consequences of his perpetual visits. To check therefore, or, if possible, entirely to put an end to them, she described him to Somerset as a man, who, under the appearance of careless gaiety, concealed such licentious principles, such determined libertinism, that he was by no means a proper character to be admitted, where there was a young woman so inexperienced and attractive as Clarentine, upon such familiar and intimate terms. The very partiality she had, whilst at Sidmouth, suspected Clarentine to entertain for him, she now changed into, what she had since perceived it really was, embarrassment and apprehension; spoke of the uneasiness she was sure his presence often gave her with concern and pity, and urged Somerset to consult her upon the subject, and endeavour, as quietly as he could, to relieve her from such wearisome importunities.

Yet whilst thus anxious to deliver herself from Eltham as a spy upon her own actions, she deeply lamented the necessity she was under at the same time of removing him as a rival from Somerset.

What

What could she now hope would prevent his seeking an explanation with Clarentine of her late coldness? and when that *was* explained, what could she hope would longer separate and disunite them?—These questions were difficult to resolve; Mrs. Hertford, however, fertile in expedients, *did* resolve them, and fixed upon a means of division she wisely concluded would be infallible.

Deeply versed in the art of investigating the characters of all those whom either her interest or her inclination induced her to court, and equally dexterous in knowing how to select from each the different qualities that could best be applied to her own service, it was not long before, in the delicate, disinterested, but of late, somewhat irritable mind of Clarentine, she discovered feelings upon which she might as successfully operate as upon the unsuspecting liberality of Somerset.

From Clarentine in person, then, she was determined the final crush of Somerset's future hopes should come: but as she had great reason to believe Eltham, finding himself banished from her presence

upon any other terms, would, rather than lose her without a struggle, renew his assiduities upon the professed and honourable footing of an avowed pretender to her hand, she waited to begin her machinations till she saw whether her suspicions were realized, and whether Clarentine herself consented to accept him.

C H A P. XIV.

MRS. Hertford was too good a judge of the human heart to be often in danger of forming wrong conclusions. A week had scarcely elapsed since the dismissal of Eltham, when one morning before Clarentine was up, the following letter from him, said to be brought by one of his grooms on horseback, was delivered to her.

MISS DELMINGTON.

“Barbarous, tyrannical and unpitying Clarentine! Tell me, was it by your stern decree I received so insulting a prohibition? Gentle and merciful as you are
to

to others, why ever thus inexorable to me? Oh! if I dared give utterance to half my indignation against you —against the cold-blooded, phlegmatic politicians who surround you, how madly I could rave and imprecate!

“ With a woman’s form, with every attractive grace, every fascinating charm the loveliest woman can boast, you possess, unfeeling Clarentine! the callous, the impenetrable nature of a rock! Did you even take the trouble to seek a *pretence* for discarding me? Did you by one alleviating, one warning sentence prepare me for my doom? No; you stabbed me by surprise; chose the very moment when, most implicitly relying upon your once promised confidence and friendship, I thought myself secure and unendangered. What a time to select for such a blow! It came upon me with the sudden shock of an unexpected and resistless thunder-stroke; and but that a *woman* was its cause—that a *woman’s hand* directed it, scarce could it have appeared to me possible or real!

“ You will tell me, perhaps—if indeed you think it worth while to attempt

any extenuation of an act so inhuman, that it was not performed at your instigation: credulity itself, however, could give no faith to such an assurance. Who would, who *ought* to hazard so arbitrary a proceeding without your concurrence? Oh, Clarentine! I know you too well—I fear also I know too well the actual state of your relentless heart, to entertain any doubt of the ready participation you gave to the whole business.

“ Would to heaven I had never seen you! never indulged the fatal propensity that led me to seek such dangerous society! From the hour I first knew you I may truly say I have never enjoyed a single day’s uninterrupted tranquillity. I am sick of such an existence: and after this one, this final effort to induce you to soften its wretchedness, am determined, if it fails, to shun you during the remainder of my life!

“ As a friend, dearest Clarentine, you reject me; as a lover you repulsed and scorned me; as a protector you distrusted me: yet, fairest and best of human beings! as a friend, a protector, a lover all in one, as the partner of your future life, the grateful

grateful sharer of all your joys, the participator and soother of all your cares—as the man, in short, whom the most indissoluble ties have bound to you at the altar, the most fervent affection attached to you for ever, will you yet, oh gentlest Clarentine! will you yet vouchsafe to receive me?

“ Artless and generous as you are, I know that from suspense or delay I have nothing to apprehend: I can support neither: decide then upon my fate but with the same mercy, you will with frankness; and in the happiest of men, and the most ardent of admirers, expect soon to behold your faithful and devoted,

“ GEORGE ELTHAM.”

The surprise, and sometimes even anger of Clarentine whilst reading this strange rhapsody, could only be equalled by the impatience she felt to answer it. Rising therefore immediately, and dressing herself in haste, she sat down, and without a moment's deliberation wrote the following reply:

GEORGE ELTHAM, ESQ.

“ You were right, Sir; in doing me the justice to believe, that on a subject

like the one upon which you have been pleased to address me, I should make it a point not to keep you an instant in suspense.

“ Accept then, Sir, my best thanks for the honour of your good opinion, but permit me, positively and for ever, to decline availing myself of it.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Your grateful and

“ Obliged humble servant,

“ CLARENTINE DELMINGTON.”

Of this answer, though she kept no copy, it was not difficult on her descending to breakfast, and finding Mr. Lenham alone in the parlour, to give him a faithful account, at the same time that she shewed him the letter that had occasioned it.

“ It is well,” said Mr. Lenham, returning it to her after he had read it, “ it is well and happy for this young man he has, at length, met with a friend honest and independent enough to give him such a lesson. Naturally arrogant, and rendered still more so by the unlimited prosperity that has attended him through life,
he

he seems to think the world was made to bow down before him. Pain or uneasiness, being almost a stranger to the very name of either, he supports with a proud impatience that irritates their smart, and gives fierceness rather than sorrow to his complaints. Whilst he could see you as often as he wished, talk to you of his passion, and apprehend no other impediments to his visits and importunities than your soft and gentle remonstrances, he was happy, because unrestrained. *Your* peace, *your* tranquillity he thought not of; nor would this offer, he acknowledges it himself, ever have been made but to relieve his own inquietude."

"I fancy," said Clarentine smiling, "it was his *intention* to do me a great deal of unmerited honour; since, having once declared himself, he seems to think that a sufficient retribution for every offensive and passionate expression contained in the rest of his letter, and dreams not of making any further apology."

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. and Miss Barclay entered to breakfast.

It was not long now before Mrs. Hertford, having obtained information of this whole

whole transaction, begun her plan of operations.

Bringing her work one morning, as was frequently her practice, and establishing herself as soon as breakfast was over in Mr. Lenham's parlour, she happened accidentally to be left alone with Clarentine, who, absent and thoughtful, was leaning in unusual inactivity over the back of a chair, opposite one of the windows.

After a short silence, during which Mrs. Hertford, discontinuing her employment, sat attentively observing her, she at length said, in a tone of kindness and concern—

“What is the matter, my dear Miss Delmington? I have remarked for some time past with infinite regret, that the cheerfulness and animation which distinguished you when I first came hither, has totally disappeared, and given way to an air of melancholy painful to behold.”

Raising her eyes at the beginning of this speech, but without changing her attitude, Clarentine fixed them with the most steady and unmoved composure upon Mrs. Hertford's face, and after a moment's pause replied—

“I ex-

“ I expected not, madam, to have excited in your breast an interest so generous concerning me. You are extremely good, and I feel grateful for your enquiries, but must be excused answering them.”

She would then have quitted the room, but Mrs. Hertford, recovering from the momentary consternation a coldness so repulsive had occasioned, called her back as she was opening the door, and hastily said—

“ Allow me, Miss Delmington, if you are not particularly engaged this morning, to request the favour of five minutes conversation with you.”

Clarentine, still grave and frigid, yet evidently much surprised, slowly turned back, and drawing a chair towards the table, seated herself without speaking—

“ I know not, Miss Delmington,” said Mrs. Hertford, at length forcing herself to begin, “ whether the confidence with which I am about to trouble you will appear deserving your attention, but the predicament in which I stand renders it necessary, that, to ensure my future peace of mind, I should now be explicit and unreserved with you.”

“ I am

“ I am ready, madam,” said Clarentine, involuntarily dreading some latent artifice, “ to hear all you may wish to communicate.”

“ You are very good, and give me courage to go on. I will frankly, confess to you then, Miss Delmington, that, the worth, the spirit, the generosity of our mutual friend, Capt. Somerset (*Here Clarentine turned pale and almost started*) has made an impression upon my heart, too deep to be easily effaced. I knew him before my marriage, and even then, though I entertained not for him the same sentiments a longer acquaintance has brought on, thought him one of the best and most amiable of men. This partiality, however, this admiration, grateful to me as it is to indulge, I have for some time struggled anxiously to repress and conquer. A suspicion—may I tell you, my sweet friend, of what nature? a suspicion the most agonizing and painful has haunted and pursued me, and till from your own lips I hear it refuted or confirmed, I can know neither rest or peace.”

Too

Too well foreseeing what was coming, Clarentine abruptly arose, and again moving towards the door, said—

“ The suspicions, madam, whatever they may be, which you entertain concerning me, I have no wish to hear explained : and therefore, I entreat, as if they had never occurred to you, and accept my best wishes for the recovery of that peace they have been the means of interrupting.”

She would then, with a calm dignity that almost over-awed even the intrepid Mrs. Hertford, have immediately left the room, but again supplicating her to return, she cried—

“ O hear me, hear me, dear and generous Clarentine ! My fate is in your hands : decide for me what it shall be, and keep me not longer in this torturing suspense ! Tell me,” added she, with quickness, “ tell me, do you love Somerset ?”

Clarentine's cheeks glowed with resentment, and her whole frame trembled with agitation as she disdainfully replied—

“ I should have hoped, Madam, that the reserve which has hitherto subsisted between us would have precluded the
possibility

possibility of your ever asking a question, which, even from a bosom-friend or a sister, would be indelicate and unwarrantable."

"You will not answer me, then? you will not so much as tell me whether by accepting Somerset's faith I wrong or—"

"Good God!" interrupted Clarentine, "do you believe, Madam, *I* would restrain you, *I* would withhold you? O no! If Mr. Somerset has offered himself to your acceptance, if it is his design to become yours, make him but as happy as he is deserving, and be assured I have no other wish."

"Excellent, noble creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Hertford with energy, "How do I honour the force of mind which can thus prompt you to renounce—"

Again Clarentine, though with less perturbation, interrupted her—"You have extremely mistaken my sentiments, Madam," said she, "I *renounce* nothing, for I have had no pretensions: I exert no *force of mind*, for I have had no weakness to conquer. Praise so humiliating, therefore, I must request to be spared."

"You

“ You amaze and you delight me !” cried Mrs. Hertford. “ So wholly, indeed, had I mistaken you, that, attributing as well your late depression as your refusal of Mr. Eltham to the same cause, hoping to serve you, I ventured, however cautiously, to insinuate my suspicions to— Somerset himself.”

With a start that was almost frantic, and a look at once wild and indignant, Clarentine tremulously repeated—

“ To *Somerset* ! you had the cruelty, the unfeminine, merciless cruelty to repeat such conjectures to *Somerset* ! oh speak,” added she with quickness, “ tell me, did he *believe* you ?”

“ Capt. Somerset,” replied Mrs. Hertford, “ is the least vain of any man I know : he might have his doubts, but—

“ Oh heavens !” exclaimed Clarentine, sinking upon a chair, and covering her face with her handkerchief, in an agony of shame and mortification, “ What is it you have done ! why raise such insulting doubts ? You have ruined, you have wilfully and irreparably injured me, and never more, if I can avoid it, will I see either Somerset or you !”

She

She was then, half distracted, hurrying out of the room, but stopping short at the door, and looking round—

“Tell him,” cried she, speaking with equal haste and emotion, “tell him, at least, when you are married, and I am gone from this hateful place, how little you were justified in forming such suspicions! whatever love, whatever friendship I once felt for him is now all converted into horror!”

She then rushed out of the room.

Mrs. Hertford, assured her labour was now completed, and fearful, if Clarentine was seen in her present agitated state, of being suspected as its cause, soon after collected her work, and telling the maid at the door she had suddenly remembered some business that called her home, left her compliments to the ladies, and quitted the house.

The detestible insinuation she had so unfeelingly persuaded her unhappy victim had escaped her, it was nothing less than true she had ever dreamed of uttering; she knew too well the effect it would have upon the enraptured Somerset to venture so dangerous and unnecessary an experiment,

ment, and perfectly convinced Clarentine's pride and indignation would be such as to lead her now most anxiously to shun every opportunity of being alone with him, she rested secure in the firm belief they would come to no explanation, but with encreased reserve continue, one from consciousness, the other from mortification, to avoid all occasions of being together.

In this opinion she was completely justified by the event. Clarentine, whose passions, either of sorrow or of anger, when they were once thoroughly roused, the keenness of her sensibility rendered it extremely difficult for her to subdue, had been so deeply hurt by the scene of the morning, and still felt herself so disturbed and irritated, that, when she received the usual summons to dinner, hearing Somerset, at whose very name she shuddered, was below, she pleaded indisposition in excuse for not going down.

In a few moments Mr. Lenham, ever kind and attentive, was at her door to enquire personally after her.

She went to him the instant she heard his voice, and affecting to speak with cheerfulness

cheerfulness, made light of her complaint, entreated him to go back to the family, and to quiet his own apprehensions about her.

“ I shall be well, dear Sir, in the evening,” added she, forcing a smile, “ and hope to be able to keep my engagement with Mrs. Denbigh, at whose house I promised to drink tea.”

Somewhat re-assured by the composed and tranquil tone in which she compelled herself to answer him, Mr. Lenham, telling her her dinner should be immediately sent up, then left her, and returned to the parlour.

There had been a time when Somerset, open and undisguised, attached to her by every tie of gratitude and of love, would have permitted no consideration, on hearing Clarentine was ill, to have prevented his flying with anxious precipitation to sooth and, if possible, mitigate her sufferings. That time was passed: it was long since, in the favorite retreat he had taken such delight in decorating for her, Clarentine, by one encouraging look or smile, had granted him admittance. Checked by her own coldness,

which, tho' within a few days it had begun to abate, he still remembered with a mixture of sorrow and of pride, all that animated sensibility with which he had formerly addressed her, with which he had spoken, not only *of* her, but *to* her, had been succeeded by a studied, distant civility of behaviour, equally well calculated to conceal his real sentiments from others, and from herself.

The first emotion and alarm, therefore, which the report of her indisposition involuntarily led him to betray, having subsided, upon hearing Mr. Lenham had seen, and found her better than he expected, during the rest of the day he carefully avoided mentioning her name, and affected, though with but little success, to discourse upon general subjects with the same ease and calmness as usual.

Meanwhile Clarentine, eager to get out of the reach, as well of Mr. Lenham's enquiries, as Somerset's dreaded presence, stole down the stairs as softly as she could when the hour was come at which she was accustomed to repair to Mrs. Denbigh's, and taking one of the maids with her, let herself out at the
garden

garden gate, to avoid being seen from the parlour windows, and proceeding lightly forward, soon reached that Lady's house.

It was no difficult task for Mrs. Denbigh, sagacious and penetrating as she was, to discover in the looks and voice of her young friend, the most manifest symptoms of perturbation and uneasiness. Clarentine's countenance was one of those, which, ingenuous and expressive, it was as easy to read as to understand; and though since the morning she had not shed one tear, heaved one sigh, or given way to any feelings but of indignation and resentment, her eyes looked so heavy, her heart seemed so oppressed, and she spoke with such unusual rapidity and incoherence, that, almost frightened to behold her, Mrs. Denbigh, after a short and anxious examination, earnestly called out—

“ My dear child, in the name of heaven! what has happened to you? Why do you look thus strange and thus disturbed?”

This eager enquiry shocked and surprised Clarentine so much, that, staring at her at first without being able to answer

fwer

swer it, she at length, in a hesitating and inarticulate voice, said—

“ Happened, my dear madam?—Nothing—what *should* have happened?”

“ Something no less extraordinary than terrible, if I may believe your countenance,” replied Mrs. Denbigh. “ Have you had any letters? any unexpected bad news?”

Too artless and candid long to elude such friendly urgency, Clarentine’s bursting heart now found a relief, no less reasonable than consolatory, in pouring out all its grief into the sympathising and indulgent bosom of Mrs. Denbigh. It was so long since she had pined, vainly pined, for some one in whom, unchecked by prudence or apprehension, she might securely confide, that, soothed and melted by the gentleness and compassion that was shewn her, every irascible passion by which she had been torn subsided, and gave place to a gratitude the most fervent, and a sensibility the most unrestrained.

When her first emotion, however, had abated, and the tears she had so abundantly shed ceased to flow, Mrs. Denbigh taking her hand, and addressing her

in a tone of mixed pleasantry and seriousness, said—

“Tender and affectionate as I have long believed you, my dearest Clarentine, I never suspected till this moment, that, to so much softness, your little heart united so much pride; you must curb it, my young friend, by every effort in your power, or greatly do I fear, that of the most benevolent and candid of human beings, it will teach you to become the most unjust and illiberal.

“Dearest Madam”—exclaimed Clarentine, with dismay—

“Nay, be not *very* seriously frightened,” resumed Mrs. Denbigh, smiling; “what I said was more meant as a caution than a reproach. I would not hurt, I would not designedly offend you for the world, yet, my best Clarentine, is there not something a little petulant and hasty in the anger with which you permit yourself to speak of Mrs. Hertford? Allowing that her regard for Captain Somerset clashes with your own; that she has unadvisedly given him to understand more of your partiality in his favour than you could wish; still, however, I see not

in either case any reason so severely to blame her. Let *your own* susceptibility be an apology for *hers*; and as for the disclosure she made to him, imprudent as it was, its *motives* at least could only be such as to do honour to her heart."

Clarentine, with a look of incredulity, and a smile of involuntary contempt, would here have interrupted her, but Mrs. Denbigh not allowing her time, somewhat gravely added—

"Young as you are, my dear Miss Delmington, these deep-rooted prejudices should not be cherished; since, if such is *now* their force, when time adds experience to natural distrust, what will be their bitterness? Oh, let not then a tendency so unamiable sully the guileless and youthful simplicity of your character! Be not only virtuous and deserving in yourself, but cultivate with care that generous and noble disposition, which should lead all whose own hearts are pure to believe well of others."

Clarentine could bear no more—

"Oh, Madam," cried she with earnestness, "what dreadful prepossession are you

yourself conceiving against me! Am I, indeed, so lost to all sense of candour and justice as you describe? Do I appear so *very* illiberal, so *very* severe as to require such a reproof? Oh, believe me, the unfavourable opinion I have thus unguardedly betrayed of Mrs. Hertford is not the mere result of sudden resentment, or groundless conjecture! I intended inviolably to have kept secret all I had ever heard concerning her, but you now *compel* me, in my own vindication, to speak openly."

She then very circumstantially repeated every particular which had tended to infuse suspicion into her mind whilst at Sidmouth; spoke of the mysterious hints that Eltham had there dropped relating to her, the caution her earnest interrogations had drawn from him, the strange and significant looks with which he had always talked of her; and lastly, of the free and contemptuous style in which he had allowed himself personally to address her.

Mrs. Denbigh listened to all these circumstances with an air of surprise which plainly shewed, that had she depended less implicitly upon the veracity of the
relator,

relator, she would have been tempted wholly to discredit them.

“ *The greatest proof of art,*” it has been said, “ *is to conceal art.*” and this Mrs. Hertford had so successfully accomplished; that, far from having ever appeared in Mrs. Denbigh’s eyes as a woman of design or contrivance, she had rather imposed herself upon her as one of volatility and thoughtlessness, who to a great deal of levity added quick parts, but neither depth enough to be capable of regular stratagem, or steadiness sufficient to apply her understanding to purposes of utility. What the qualities of her heart might be, she had found no opportunity of seriously investigating: concluding them, however, to be rather benevolent than otherwise, from her constant readiness to oblige and her never-failing good-humour, she had always seen her without distrust, and conversed with her without reserve.

These being her sentiments, when Clarentine paused, Mrs. Denbigh frankly avowed them, adding,

“ Upon the opinion of such a man as Mr. Eltham, careless and inconsiderate as, without a doubt, *he* is, I can conse-

quently put but little reliance. Mrs. Hertford, though now I believe she is seriously attached, once appeared to me, and formerly unquestionably was, a giddy, vain coquette, fond of admiration, and delighting in new conquests: Mr. Eltham himself possessed much the same turn of mind; and these two, playing upon each other, with identical weapons, may very probably have had some little difference, the gentleman's *proud stomach* knows not, even yet, how to digest. If he really thought *her* more to blame than *himself*, there was nothing dishonourable in his guardedly cautioning you against her: yet, from an adviser so ill qualified for the task, I would not, Miss Delmington, too readily imbibe injurious surmises."

"Well Madam," cried Clarentine, "further than this, I will say no more upon the subject: it is equally impossible for me either to *forget* or not to *feel*; I am convinced, therefore, that as long as I remain in Mrs. Hertford's vicinity, thinking of her as I *must* think, and suffering by her as I *must* suffer, I can enjoy no ease or comfort. Where I can go I know not, but from Mr. Lenham's house
dying

during the present posture of affairs I am determined to remove !”

“ Are you serious,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, with much astonishment. “ I never was more so,” answered Clarentine firmly.

Mrs. Denbigh after this was silent a few minutes ; but at length, addressing Clarentine again, and with the utmost kindness, she said—

“ If such, my dearest Miss Delmington, is your decided resolution, far from attempting to dissuade you from it, I will rather endeavour to make my own advantage of it. You say, that, at this moment you have fixed upon no particular place to repair to : I am myself, in a very short time, going to Bath : but as motives of friendship alone will lead me there, and I expect not to visit or be visited by more than one family in the place, its being so *early* or so *late*, (I know not which to call it) in the season, is to me perfectly immaterial : will it be so, however, to *you*, my young friend, and can you voluntarily consent to shut yourself up, perhaps during six weeks, with so peevish an old moralizer ?”

“ Ah,

“ Ah, Madam!” cried the delighted Clarentine—“ if I could but flatter myself you were indeed serious in making me such a proposal! but it cannot be: it would render me *too* happy, and happiness and I seem destined to be great strangers!”

Mrs. Denbigh, much affected by the purport of this speech, after assuring her in the most friendly terms she had never made an offer she so sincerely wished might be accepted, attempted to re-animate her courage and cheer her hopes.

“ It is too soon for you yet, my Clarentine,” said she, “ to admit lasting sorrow or despondence into your breast. The world is all before you, a world into which you have hitherto scarcely taken more than a stolen glance: many, many are the comforts, the felicities I hope, it has still in reserve for you. Your own merit will make you friends; your independence ensure you respect; and the goodness and purity of your heart bestow upon you internal approbation. With such prospects, such health, such innocence and youth, why, then, my dearest girl,

girl, why give way to this vain and thankless dejection!"

"Ah! believe me, Madam," answered Clarentine, the tears once more glistening in her eyes—"I have *not* given way to it! No day has now ever passed for many weeks that I have not strained every nerve to appear chearful, even when my heart has been most oppressed; and tho' often wishing to indulge reflection, often wishing to be alone, I have yet always forced myself into occupation or society."

"In both," said Mrs. Denbigh, "you were wise and right: persevere, then, my gentle friend, in the same course, and doubt not but that, in a very short time, your virtuous efforts will be prosperous and successful."

She then reverted to the subject of their meditated journey, which she told her it had been her design to begin in about a week, but that, if it was her wish, and Mr. Lenham made no opposition to it, she would accelerate her departure without hesitation, and prepare every thing in order to set out in three days.

Clarentine was very grateful for this second offer, and very desirous, on find-
ing

ing it really put Mrs. Denbigh to no serious inconvenience, of accepting it. They mutually agreed, therefore, to be ready early on the following Tuesday: and then Clarentine, all thanks and acknowledgments, and Mrs. Denbigh all benevolent kindness, separated for the evening.

END OF VOL. II.

ERRATA to VOL. II.

Page 7, line 18, *for en, read sa.* Page 9, l. 3, *after re-*
pairs add and. Ib. l. 4, *after friend add was.* Page
 31, l. 23, *for Sophia, r. Sophie.* Page 36, l. 7, *for*
Sophia, again, r. Sophie. Page 72, l. 22, *for you, r. I.*
 Page 79, l. 16, *after doubts add were.* Page 93, l. 7,
for inmate, r. intimate. Page 103, l. 1, *after fixing*
add his eyes on. Page 129, l. 22, *for introducing, r.*
introduction. Page 148, l. 8, *after entertainment,*
dele had. Page 154, l. 22, *for visible, r. risible.* Page
 171, l. 19, *for began, r. begin.* Page 183, l. 19, *for*
her, r. Miss Delmington. Page 216, l. 10, *after de-*
clared add herself. Page 225, l. 18, *for intentions, r.*
intention. Page 242, l. 8, *for would, r. could.* Page
 252, l. 14, *for gentiv, r. negligently.* Page 264, l. 7,
for new, r. near. Page 265, l. 19, *after at, r. his.*
 Page 272, l. 13, *after will, dele with.* Page 284, last
 line, *after her, dele own.*



